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# GUIN PAP

· stories, poems,  
contemporary v

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## The Editor Says

**WHEN** we decided to attempt in the Penguin sixpennies a series of collections of new short stories different in character from most of the stories printed in the popular magazines we felt most doubtful about the venture's prospects of success.

In the first place we were afraid that the British public's alleged indifference to the short story except for "holiday" reading might mean a cold reception for short stories demanding from the reader a more sustained mental effort and digestive energy. Next we were far from sure that material of the qualitative standard we had set for ourselves would be forthcoming. On the latter score we were immediately reassured. MSS. at once began to come in at the rate of ten a day (the average per day is now thirty) and once in every hundred or so we found something to excite us—often by an author of whom we had never heard. We had decided from the outset to be no respectors of persons or names in the business of acceptance and rejection, but to treat each manuscript submitted purely on what we believed to be its merits, and to treat all contributors on the same footing with regard to payment.

As things have turned out the percentage of work received from established authors and rejected is very little lower than the percentage of work rejected from

authors whose names were hitherto hardly known ; also, every now and then there has been something outstanding from an author who has never before had anything published.

There was still the question whether the public would down its thumbs. It was answered in no uncertain way. *Penguin Parade* I proved an immediate and sensational seller in spite of the serious and sometimes grim note struck in most of the stories it contained. Letters of congratulation and thanks poured in to Harmondsworth from all parts of the Empire. *Penguin Parade* had arrived, and numbers 2 and 3 have consolidated its position.

For my part, I take off my hat to the publishers for their courage and enterprise, and to our readers for supporting with their sixpenny pieces our desire to give first-rate work of a kind, for which there was supposed to be no market in this country, a chance of publication.

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## PENGUIN PARADE

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# We Never Died in Winter

BY FRED URQUHART

THE first month I was in the Royal Georgian Hospital for Tuberculosis the girls in Mathiesons' visited me regularly, but when winter came I got fewer and fewer visitors. Soon, Roddy was the only one I could depend upon. He came on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. At first he used to say: "When are you going to get out of here?" But after a while he stopped asking. He must have realised how foolish his question was. Sometimes I had the feeling as he sat beside my bed that he blamed himself because I was there. If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't have gone to see the doctor in the first place. But early one morning when we were coming home from a dance he said: "Can't you walk a bit quicker? You're trailing along there as if you couldn't help it."

"Neither I can," I said.

And honestly I was dead-beat. It wasn't the result of the dance, for I'd felt like this before I went to it. I'd felt like this for such a long time that I couldn't remember when exactly I'd first noticed it. Indeed, I hadn't noticed it at all. It was so much part of me that it was as natural as any other feeling. I was always tired and dispirited. I used to think it was

## WE NEVER DIED IN WINTER

"Snap out of it," Roddy said "You'd better see a doctor if you're not going to brighten up a bit."

I tried to walk more quickly, but that only made me cough.

"That cold of yours never seems to get any better," Roddy said "You'd better see the doctor Maybe you need a tonic "

"Maybe," I said

Next day I went to the doctor, and the first thing he said was: "Good God, girl, why didn't you come to see me sooner ?"

"I thought it was just an ordinary cold," I said.

"How long have you had it ?" he said.

"About three years," I said "On and off."

"Good God !" he said

I must have looked shocked, for he said "Some of you people would make a saint swear Why don't you go and see a doctor when there's anything wrong with you ? What do you think we doctors are here for ?"

And straightaway he ordered me off to the Royal Georgian I was put into Ward Five beside the other Artificial Pneumathorics patients who were on "Strict" bed. It was August. lovely warm weather. I had been looking forward to going to Blackpool for the first fortnight in September, and I was mad at having to go to my bed It wasn't as if I felt ill, really ill, that is. Still it'll be for only a week or two, I said to myself, then you'll be better and you'll get home. The first day I was so miserable that I hardly spoke to anybody, but I soon cheered up. What was the good of moping, anyway ? I had T B. so that was the end of it. And I got talking to the other girls in the ward.

## FRED URQUHART

I discovered that there were three other Ms. beside myself—Mary Thompson, Mary Gibson and Mary Coates. We often used to sing that old song that Mary, Queen of Scots and her ladies-in-waiting sang: *Last night there were four Marys, To-night there will be but three*. But after a few weeks we didn't sing it any more. It made us feel sad, and made us think that maybe it might turn out to be true.

Mary Gibson had been in the R. G. for six months; Mary Thompson for two months, and Mary Coates for three months. This was Mary Coates' second visit, though. Eighteen months ago she had been in for six months. "But it's my own fault that I'm here again," she said. "I didn't do what the Chief told me. I'll know better this time. No smoking, no dancing, no pictures, no nothing. When I get out I'm going to be a blooming plaster saint!"

We all laughed, but somehow or other we didn't think it very funny, because Mary's face was almost blue and her sputum-bottle was hardly ever out of her hands.

I came in on a Wednesday, and Roddy came to see me on the first visiting-day, Saturday. When he came he sat and glowered. He was uncomfortable at seeing so many girls in pyjamas and bed-jackets. All the men who visited the ward had that "lost" look the first two or three times they came, but they always lost it sooner or later. Roddy wanted to know exactly what the doctor had said and what they had done to me and *how long I'd be in*.

So I tried my best to tell him. I said: "He says that one of my lungs is touched, and that all I need is a rest. The work in Mathiesons is too confining and he says

## WE NEVER DIED IN WINTER

"I have to get another job where I'll get more fresh air when I get my discharge."

"When will that be?" Roddy said

"Maybe six weeks," I said. "I dunno. It depends on how long they keep my lung collapsed."

"Your lung collapsed?" he said

"Sure," I said. "It's collapsed, and I'm getting Artificial Pneumathorics treatment."

Everybody who came wanted to know what Artificial Pneumathorics was, and I got fed-up explaining it to them. Nobody in the R G ever called it by its full name; we all said that so-and-so was an A P. case, and we left it at that. Life, we felt, was too short for such long words. But all my visitors were interested and wanted to know everything about my illness. They looked at me as if I were some kind of beast in a cage when I told them that one of my lungs was collapsed. "But you *look* all right," they said. "You look so healthy, you really shouldn't be lying in your bed at all."

I laughed and said that it was the air in my 'Summer Residence' that did the trick. They all thought that 'Summer Residence' was a good one, and they said to each other "Mary keeps wonderfully cheerful, doesn't she?" as if they were disappointed at not finding me in tears.

Each patient is allowed only two visitors at a time in the wards, but you can get as many as you like when you're in the shelters. Or as many as will come to see you. Usually by the time the patient gets into the shelters her visitors are tired of coming to see her; the novelty of visiting a consumptive friend has worn off. That's what happened to me, anyway. Often in the

winter when I was in one of the shelters I wished that some of the visitors I'd had at first hadn't been so anxious to come and see me then, but had waited till I really looked like an invalid.

These first two or three Sundays, for instance, I had so many visitors that they had to take turns to come in to see me, five or ten minutes at a time. They all brought me sweets and flowers and fruit and pretty soon my bed began to look like a shop-counter. I got tired telling each of them all the ins and outs of the treatment I was getting, so I wasn't sorry when four or five of them sneaked in at once. But they weren't there for long before Sister came in and said in her snippy way: "Only two at a time allowed"

Roddy got annoyed because all the girls were there. "I can't get a chance to speak to you at all," he said. And he asked away from his work and came on Wednesdays, too. Mother always came on Wednesdays, and she and Roddy sat and stared at each other and things were so uncomfortable that I had to do most of the talking myself.

But mother wasn't so quiet when Roddy wasn't there. She grumbled because I needed so many things when I came in and because I wanted something else every week. "Your middle name should be *Want*," she said. "Where do you think I get the money?"

My pay hadn't been very big, but she missed it. When I came into hospital I applied for National Health Benefit, but I was told that, although I was eligible for it, I wouldn't get anything until I got my discharge from the R.G. Then I'd get it in case I wasn't able to start work at once.



"Why can't they give it to you just now?" mother said.

"Because they say the R G supplies all I need," I said.

"Well, in that case why did you ask me to buy a dressing-gown and pyjamas and a bed-jacket?" she said.

"Who was going to wear the flannel nightgown the R G provides?" I said, laughing "I didn't want to look like Little Orphan Annie"

"You're like your father," she said. "You never think of where the money's to come from Oh, the lord will provide! You're jack-easy, both of you."

"What's he saying about me being in here?" I said

But I knew before she told me. I knew that Dad's remark when things were looking blackest was always *We never died in winter yet!* He never worried; he left that to mother "One worried face is enough in the house at a time," he said

Dad didn't come to see me till the third Sunday I was in the R.G. He sat uncomfortably at my bedside and he looked around.

"You're getting plenty of fresh air, anyway," he said, nodding at all the wide-open windows. "A change for you, eh?"

"You bet," I said.

"It's funny to see you lying here," he said.

"Is it?" I said. "You wouldn't think it so funny if it were you"

"I mean that it's funny to see you lying practically in the open-air when you think of how you always wanted all the windows shut at home."

"Isn't it?" I said.

"Your mother says you're eating well," he said.

"You bet," I said.

"You were always such a pick," he said.

"Wasn't I?" I said.

"Changed days!" he said.

"You bet," I said.

And honestly it was changed days. When I first came in I ate everything they gave me. Perhaps it was due to the fresh air and to not working, but I think it was mainly because of the greater variety that the R.G. kitchen offered. You simply don't feel hungry when you know that at home you get stew on Mondays, mince on Tuesdays, sausages on Wednesdays, and so on.

Dad looked from bed to bed, from Mary Coates' blue face to Liz Jerome's white one. "You look all right, anyway," he said, and I thought there was a note of relief in his voice. "See that you do everything the doctor tells you," he said.

"You bet," I said

And honestly I did what I was told. I was a model patient. Every time he examined me the Chief was pleased. I put on weight. I was only seven and a half stones when I came in, but it wasn't long before I was nine stones. "I'm going to get a job as a fat lady in a circus when I get out of here," I told my visitors.

I was on 'Strict' bed for six weeks, and in a way I passed the time pleasantly enough. It was very restful to lie there by the open window and to look out at the lovely gardens, and it was fine to know that I didn't need to rush and go to work. It was just like being on holiday. The R.G. was more like a hotel than a hospital.

And once I had got used to the idea of having T.B. I was prepared to make the best of it. It wasn't as if I had any pain. Not like Mary Coates, who was sometimes so bad that she couldn't speak: she just lay and stared at the ceiling. But the rest of us passed the time in talking and knitting and writing letters. I wrote so many letters that the house-doctor asked me if I was writing a book. At first, everybody that I wrote to answered, but pretty soon I didn't get any answers. So I stopped writing and spent all my time knitting.

I knitted myself a lemon jumper and I started to knit a mauve one, but I stopped when I found that my clothes didn't fit me the same. "I'll need to wait till I stop expanding!" I said. And I knitted a jumper for mother and socks for Roddy. I began to knit him a pullover for his birthday, but I never finished it. It's lying in my case now. Sometimes I think I'll unravel it and knit something else, but I haven't the heart. I can't bear to look at it after what happened

. . .

At the beginning of November, when I was allowed up most of the day, I was put in one of the shacks. Or the shelters, as Matron called them; she was annoyed when one of the few letters I got was addressed to Shack Number Four. There were twelve shacks, and they lay in a half-circle at the top of the lawn. They had only three sides and there were windows in each side, so we got plenty of fresh air. They were on swivels, and the nurses turned them round whenever the wind changed. We weren't allowed to turn them round ourselves, though sometimes when the wind changed through the night we got up and had them shifted before the Night

Nurse got our length; we preferred the risk of being reported to the Chief to the risk of having the wind drive the rain on to us, for though we had water-proof covers on our beds there was always the chance that the wind would blow in such strong gusts that it would drive the rain in as far as our pillows.

Usually the shacks faced the road, so that we saw all the traffic that passed. Sometimes Mathieson's big van passed, and Alfie, the driver, always waved to me. Once or twice I spoke to him over the wall, and he told me all the latest news of the shop. But I was never able to speak freely to him; I always had to keep my eyes skinned for Sister; we weren't supposed to speak to anybody over the wall. Especially men. We weren't even allowed to speak to the male-patients. We did, of course. We wouldn't have been human if we hadn't spoken to them. And the fact that it was forbidden added to the fun.

There was some awfully nice boys amongst them. You'd never have thought, to see some of them, that there was anything wrong with them. Sometimes I used to think that it was even harder on them than it was on us; a woman can be a chronic invalid all her life, yet she can manage to muddle through some way or other because she's usually dependent on somebody else, but a man simply can't afford to be an invalid if he had his living to make like those boys. It was a pretty black outlook for them. All the same they managed to keep cheerful

. . . . .

It was a terribly severe winter. Folk said it was the worst they'd ever experienced. But they didn't really

know anything about it. If they'd been in the R G. they'd have died. Sometimes I wonder why I didn't die myself. But it's funny that none of the patients died in the winter, though some of them have died since. The few people who came to see me huddled themselves in their heavy coats and gave exaggerated shivers. "I don't know how you stand it," they said. "I'd be dead within three days." But I just laughed and said, "You get used to everything but hanging!" And sometimes I used to sing *I wouldn't leave my little wooden hut for you! I've got one lover and I don't want two!*

All the same it was no joke when the Night Nurse wakened us in the mornings. Especially on those mornings the snow lay thick on the ground for weeks. We used to wake and find it lying three or four inches thick on our water-proof covers. We were supposed to get up at seven o'clock, but Nurse usually wakened us at ten to seven, so that gave us a few minutes to pluck up courage. We always lay to the very last minute and then we would begin to count, and as soon as we had reached twenty we'd jump out of bed and pull on our coats over our pyjamas. Then Wilma would race me to the bathroom in Ward Five. We weren't supposed to run, but we knew that it wasn't likely that either Sister or Matron would see us at that time in the morning.

I don't know what I'd have done without Wilma. She was a real cheery case, and she and I got along fine. She had been in for two months longer than I had, and she was always talking about getting her discharge, for she was engaged and she hoped to get married as soon as she got out. But she didn't keep moaning about

it and make both herself and me miserable, as Liz Jerome would have done if she had been in Wilma's place.

When I think of it, I realise how lucky I was to get Wilma for a shack-mate and not Liz Jerome, who was put in the shacks at the same time as I was. Liz was awful sentimental, and she cried at the least thing. Every time we played the gramophone in the Recreation room she cried at all the sad records. The first time she heard *When I Grow Too Old to Dream* you'd have thought she was at a funeral, and when I laughed she said: "You've got a brick for a heart, Mary Orr."

But I just laughed all the more. If I hadn't laughed I'd have cried even more than Liz was crying herself. For I'd just got the letter from Roddy that morning.

. . .

If I'd known that Roddy was looking for another job I wouldn't have got such a shock when I got his letter. But I had no idea that he was dissatisfied with his work; he seemed to be getting along all right. That was why I took it so hard, him doing it behind my back. I felt that either he hadn't been interested enough to tell me or that he had been afraid to tell me in case I tried to stop him—though God knows I wouldn't have done that, I was too keen for him to get on so that we could get married. Or was he afraid that I was in the R.G. for 'keeps'? It was only then that I realised that I'd been there for nearly five months, and that there was no likelihood of getting out soon. I tried not to worry about it, but all the time the feeling was there, and however hard I tried I couldn't escape from it.

Not that Roddy had ever shown that he thought I was in the R.G. for good. Every Saturday and Sunday up to Christmas he visited me regularly. Some time before that he stopped coming on Wednesdays since I hadn't so many visitors and he could get me all to himself when he came. I was glad of that, but sometimes I couldn't help wishing that somebody would come in and give us something to talk about. For Roddy had absolutely no conversation whatsoever. He had never been a great talker, but I had always managed to find something to interest him. In the R.G. however, I was simply lost. It was just what I'd imagine prison would be like. Sometimes we didn't see newspapers for days. There was always the wireless, of course, but we never listened to anything but dance-music, as soon as we heard talking we switched it off. So I didn't know very well what to say when Roddy came, unless it was to talk about the other patients, and he wasn't very much interested in them. All he seemed interested in was how long I was going to be there. He never seemed able to realise that I had T.B. "You shouldn't be in here," he often said. "Why, you look as well as I do."

At Christmas and the New Year he was busy at his work so he could come in only for a little while on Christmas and New Year days. He came the first Sunday in the new year, but he didn't come on the following Saturday or Sunday. I had no idea of what could have kept him, and when I didn't get any letter on the Monday I began to be worried. I knew that he wasn't a great hand at writing letters, but I thought that he might have let me know what was wrong.

The letter came on the Tuesday. It was very short and said that he had suddenly got a job in London and that he had to go very quickly and hadn't had time to come in to see me before he went.

Of course, I found plenty of excuses for him. But, at the same time, I knew that he could easily have come in, even although it had been only for a few minutes. And not being on a visiting-day wouldn't have mattered. Matron would have allowed him in at once if he had just asked. After all, it wasn't as if I were a prisoner or anything like that. I shut myself in the bathroom and started to cry, but I stopped when I remembered that I hadn't any powder with me. I didn't want any of the girls to know that I'd been crying. In case they thought it strange about Roddy not coming to visit me any more I said casually that I'd known that he was going to a job in London but that I hadn't thought of mentioning it to them.

Roddy wrote to me every week at first, and told me all about his new job; he was always anxious to know if I was feeling better and if I'd be able to get out soon. In one of his first letters he mentioned that he hoped to get a raise after he had been there for six months, so this would mean that we'd be able to get married. And in a letter two or three weeks after that he said that he was thinking about putting his name down for one of the new houses in a Building Scheme that was going up. Of course I made a lot of plans in the letters I wrote to him, telling him the kind of house I thought we should have and things like that, but sometimes I couldn't help wondering if those plans would ever come to anything. For my Discharge seemed as far away as ever. I had stopped putting on weight; somehow or



other I just didn't have the same appetite as I'd had when I came in. And at the end of January I got a cold and didn't seem able to throw it off. Apart from those things the Chief always seemed well enough pleased with me, but whenever I mentioned Discharge he would shake his head and say: "There's time enough for that, my dear young lady."

All February, March and April I got letters regularly twice a week from Roddy. Then he told me not to be surprised if he didn't write so often as he was going to be very busy before the Coronation; his firm had a lot of contracts and he was working overtime. "I'm saving up," he wrote, "so it will be better for us both in the long run." I didn't mind at all so long as I knew he was well enough. And, although he wrote only one short letter every week and then towards the Coronation only once a fortnight, I wrote to him regularly twice a week. I told him all the funny things that happened in the R.G. so as to show him that I was keeping my pecker up and wasn't losing hope after being there for nearly nine months. And really there were quite a lot of funny things that happened just about that time.

For instance, there was the time that some of the male-patients climbed the wall and went off for the afternoon. They often did that, and nobody ever found out. But this afternoon they went to Princes Street Gardens and the first person they met was Sister. It was her afternoon off, and that was one of the reasons why they had been bold enough to go that far. They didn't know what to do; it was too late to cut and run. But Sister just smiled sweetly at them and said: "Good afternoon, boys," and walked past as if they were just casual acquaintances.

After that none of the Males would hear us say anything against Sister. They said she wasn't a bad sort, but we told them that it was only because she was an old maid and had a soft spot in her heart for men.

She wasn't bad to us either, sometimes. It all depended if you got the right side of her. She could be real mean sometimes, but there were times when she was quite human

One of these times was on the day of the Coronation of George VI. She came into the Recreation Room when we were listening to the Broadcast from Westminster Abbey and she said. "Have any of you girls got any sweeties?"

"No, Sister," I said, and it was the truth.

"Have you?" she said to Wilma

Wilma had, but she thought that Sister was going to confiscate them, so she said: "No, Sister."

"Have you?" Sister said to Liz.

"Y-Yes, Sister," Liz said in a low voice.

"You might bring them," Sister said "I feel like eating a sweetie"

Liz was so flabbergasted that she brought two tins. Sister took them and sat down with them on her lap. She ate continually for the next hour while listening to the service, and at the long bits where there was nothing but the pealing of the organ she told us all about her life when she was a girl.

But Sister could be real mean, too. Like the time when she reported Wilma and me to the Chief for talking to the Males, and she didn't report any of the Males. She said that they had run so that she wasn't able to see who they were! But the Chief said that as neither Wilma nor I had run we were to be commended.

So that was one in the eye for Sister. Some of the girls said that the reason why Sister was so changeable was that she had been in love with somebody who had jilted her, but I don't know if that was the reason or not. I don't think that anybody who had been jilted could be so mean to other folk. If you can't eat your cake yourself there's no sense in keeping it from others.

. . . . .

I got a letter from Roddy a few days after the Coronation. I got two letters that morning I kept Roddy's to the last like a kid with a fancy cake. I didn't know who the other letter was from, but when I opened it I found that it was from Mary Coates' mother.

All through the winter Mary Coates coughed and spluttered and her face got bluer and bluer. Soon she couldn't sit up in bed at all. In February the Chief wanted to send her to another hospital where she would get more specialised treatment (he said this though he knew there was no hope) but her mother wouldn't hear of it; she said that if Mary was going to die she'd die at home. And though the Chief said it was a mistake Mrs Coates took Mary away.

This was a letter to say that she was dead. I sat and looked at it for a long time. I knew that it was the best thing for Mary, but I thought how unfair it was, after she had struggled so hard all winter, to die just then when the summer was going to begin. I felt that I should pray for her, but it was such a long time since I had prayed that I didn't know how to start. I just sat on the edge of my bed and slowly I ripped open Roddy's letter.

I read it twice before I realised what it meant, and then I sat and stared at it, not thinking I was sitting like that when Wilma ran into the shack. She was roaring and laughing and she collapsed on her bed. I looked at her for a while before I could manage to say: "What's wrong?"

She was laughing so much that she couldn't answer me, and she nearly choked when she started to tell me "It's Liz Jerome," she said "She's roaring and crying"

"That's nothing to laugh about," I said.

But Wilma laughed all the more when she heard the tone of my voice. "Oh, it's funny," she said. "You should go along and see her"

"I don't think it's funny at all," I said "Maybe when the Chief examined her yesterday he told her something that she didn't tell us."

"No, it's not that at all," Wilma said "She's reading a love-story and it's that sad that she can't help weeping"

I stood up slowly and held out the two letters. "Take those along and let her read them," I said "Maybe they'll give her something to cry about. Mary Coates is dead, and my boy-friend has given me the heave."

. . . . .

That was three months ago. I'm back home again Mother made me come home; she said I wasn't getting any better in the R.G. The Chief and she had an awful row about it; he said that she wasn't giving me a chance, nor him either; he wanted to study my case to find out why I had such a relapse after getting so far along the road to recovery the first few months I was

in But mother wouldn't hear anything he said, and she bundled me home. "She'll spend what time she has left among her own folk," she said. But Dad told her to shuttup. "You're always looking on the black side, woman," he said. "We never died in winter yet. Did we, Mary?"

# La Belle Suzanne

BY GERMAINE BEAUMONT

(Translated by RALPH COOKE)

"You want me to tell you about Monsieur Papeau. Certainly I will, but it's an odd story. You must make what you like of it. All I can do is to go over it exactly as it happened. Exactly. Adding nothing, leaving out nothing. Very well, then.

To begin with, this cottage you've just been looking at, which he asked me, as his friend and neighbour, to try to let for him, gives you a pretty good idea of what Monsieur Papeau is like—was like, I should say. A minor civil servant with a little money of his own. Enough to supplement a small salary but not quite enough to live on without working. You've seen the horsehair arm-chairs, the china heirlooms on the mantelpiece, the solid old oil lamps—no electric light, you see!—the green tablecloth with the fringe, and the bedroom with the enlarged photographs of the more recent Papeaux. Nothing luxurious or original or decorative. A little plain comfort, that's all. A place that could belong only to the simplest, most unpretentious, most stay-at-home sort of man you could find, until——

I must tell you that every morning he went to his office, took lunch at a small restaurant, and came back here in the evening to a meal which his housekeeper

got for him. After dinner he smoked a pipe, either in the dining-room or in this bit of garden, with me. We gossiped, you know. Two old bachelors without family or relations. Bouvard and Pecuchet, eh ? That's how things had gone on for a long time. They might have gone on like that always if he had not taken it into his head one day to pay a visit to a second-hand market. Someone in his office had been talking to him about a new craze for a certain kind of old furniture, and there were some pieces of this very furniture stowed away in his cottage. The prospect of turning them into a little extra money appealed to him. One Friday evening he said to me :

"I would like to take a look round at St Ouen before I sell them, Monsieur Octopon. It may give me some idea of what they're worth before I go to a dealer. Do you care to come to-morrow afternoon ?"

I couldn't go. Ah, that was the unfortunate part of it. If only I had gone with him perhaps he would never have come back with *La Belle Suzanne*."

"*La Belle Suzanne* ?"

"Yes. A ship in a bottle. A little sky-blue ship with her name in scarlet on her counter: *La Belle Suzanne*. A beautiful little ship, that made one ask how she got into the bottle, with her masts and rigging and all her sails set. You know, of course, how ships get into bottles, but there are still people who are mystified by it, and I was one of them until Monsieur Papeau bought *La Belle Suzanne*. I admired her, I must say, and I advised him to put her on the mantelpiece in the dining-room, instead of the marble clock that you saw there just now. The clock went on to a cupboard and *La Belle Suzanne* was installed with ceremony.

A few days later, when I dropped in after supper, I found him examining his ship through a magnifying-glass.

"She's a barque," he said. "I've been looking in the encyclopaedia and I know the names now of all her ropes and sails. Those are her fore and main top-gallant sails, those are her topsails, those are her fore-stays, that's her flying jib, that's her staysail, that's her standing jib, and that's the mizzen mast, fore-and-aft rigged."

And heaven knows what other names he had learnt!

"Don't you find," he asked me, some days afterwards, "that that thing makes your imagination work?"

He had a new look about the eyes. They were clearer, deeper, and seemed to go beyond you; and he touched the bottle as if it were something he were fond of.

Not long after that he said to me:

"I've been to the Nautical Museum. Ah, *La Belle Suzanne* is nothing to what I saw there!"

And he started talking of carracks and ketches and brigs and corvettes and schooners and clippers as if he had been to sea from a boy, when I believe the only ship he had ever been on was a river steamer.

It got so that I hardly knew him. A man so settled in his way of living! And now he spent most of his spare time on the quays, talking to sailors, being taken about in tug-boats and sailing-barges. . . .

It was after one of these excursions that he said to me.

"We're two old stick-in-the-muds, Monsieur Octopon. We shall die without seeing anything. The sailor who put *La Belle Suzanne* into the bottle probably knew



all the ports of India, China and Japan. And the South Sea Islands ! Think of the South Sea Islands !”

“Thanks,” I said. “If it comes to islands, the Cité is enough for me.”

But he took no notice of that.

“Fancy dying here like a clod—to-morrow, perhaps—without any curiosity or feeling, when there’s the sea and all those places. . . .”

That was the end. He lost his tranquillity and air of well-being. He smoked his pipe a great deal and spent a lot of time reading books of travel and adventure. He bought a large atlas. He took no interest in his work, and he began to lose weight and look unwell. Then he suddenly sent in his resignation. After that he got even more restless and ill-looking. He could settle to nothing. He seemed absorbed in his books and his atlas. This went on for some time, and then. . . .”

Monsieur Octopan came to a stop. He seemed disturbed.

“He died ?” I asked, sympathetically.

“He went away,” answered Monsieur Octopan. “He realised his small capital and went away to sea. Nearly a year ago now. He sent me a post-card from Marseilles, from Port Said, from Goa, and from Singapore. On the last one he asked me to let his house for him and said that he felt a different man and wasn’t coming back. . . .”

It was getting towards evening. In Monsieur Papeau’s garden it was a very quiet and peaceful evening. A slight wind was moving the branches of a young lilac tree across the face of the cottage.

“And *La Belle Suzanne* ?” I asked.

Monsieur Octopon pointed to some new earth near the foot of the lilac.

"She's there," he said. "She can do no harm there. Monsieur Papeau was alone in the world. But, you see, she might have affected other people. . . . I——"

He did not finish. A month later, when I had occasion to go to see him again, I was told that he had settled all his affairs and gone away.

# Death of a Poet

BY A. C. BOYD

COVER the frost-bitten features, the twisted hand,  
Straighten the shattered limbs,  
And the eyes, iced, that could not weep.  
Huge and remote the gleaming mountain stands,  
But the distant peaks were not for him—  
Only the lower ranges, vista-less steeps:

    Blinded the blistered eye that could not span  
    The mountain top and the little life of man

Carry this stiffened body down to the valley  
Where the snow-carpet melts to uncover  
The flowers and flutes he did not care to know;  
The bonfires, and the cries of animals, and the fair's  
    folly,

And the mild fountain spilling tears and laughter.  
Lay down this thing where, far from ice-splendours go,  
Grieving a little, the gentle people that he knew—  
He had forgotten they were lovely too.

# Mexican Night

BY ALEXANDER MARTIN

JOHN FINLAY found himself staring at his mosquito net in one of those sudden movements of waking that leave one with all one's senses alert. He had got well accustomed to them of late, to waiting for the sound that had waked him to repeat itself but in the last two days, after the rifle fire to the east had died to a few intermittent shots as stragglers were rounded up, he had had some sleep at night

He lay quietly on his back, listening. The moonlight streamed through the wire screen that served him for a window, and threw the soft shadow of a plantain leaf across the foot of his bed. If there had been an unusual sound it did not repeat itself. There was only the shrilling of the frogs at the lake's edge, a noise that bored through one's eardrums at first, but after a while became a mere background that was not noticed unless it stopped. Every now and then, too, a night bird hissed briefly like a man furtively calling attention to himself. On his first night at Tlaloc-tepec the urgent little noise had jerked him upright on his bed, his mind suddenly bobbing with fragments of bandit stories. He called out "Quien?" And when the sound had come again he had picked up his revolver and gone out, to find nothing. The Indians called it simply

"Pajaro Silbador," which did not take one very far. If a bird were blue they would call it the Blue Bird.

There was no shooting to-night, not even from the victorious, and therefore drunken, Government troops at Santa Ana, five miles away to the east, who liked the banging echo of random shots in city streets when they were celebrating. But John Finlay felt no inclination to go back to sleep. It might have been that the moon was so strong, pouring enough light into the room for him to have read good print. He lit a cigarette, and carefully chose a subject to think about. But instead of the heavy green fruit of his plantations there hung unwaveringly in front of his mind's eye the faces of the beaten stragglers that had knocked at his door the day after the battle. Yaqui faces mostly, with broad high cheekbones and deep-set, slanting little eyes. They always called in Yaquis as cannon fodder when there was a revolution. Yaquis liked fighting; that and the pleasantries that could be practised on captured enemies, were the only pleasures they had. Besides, their chiefs told them that if they died in battle away from home they would at once be born again in their own pueblos, up in the north there, in Sonora. Their own generals were afraid of them; but now they had been tired, thirsty, beaten, half-starved, and mostly wounded. They asked humbly for water, and he had helped them as much as he could. Some of them would get back. A resolute band, deserted in Yucatan a few years before by their general, had fought their way home along the whole length of Mexico, through country creeping with hatred of them. So he had helped these ones. He had felt a great deal of sympathy for them, miserably equipped and betrayed.

He knew that some of the Indians in the village had asked them in, promising them water and herbs for their wounds, and then quietly and pitilessly murdered them for the sake of their rifles. He couldn't be certain of his own *mozos* in their huts at the bottom of the garden, though he had seen and heard nothing.

From here and there he had picked up the story of the battle. The revolutionaries under General Flores had occupied the village of Santa Ana and dug trenches on this side of the river. When the Government troops came up they could not force a passage. The wind had, without fuss, laid on the lake shore below John Finlay's land the bodies of some of those who had died trying to cross the stream five miles away. That had gone on for four days. Then one night a bag containing eight thousand pesos, gold, lay on the table of General Flores' headquarters, and an hour later he was gone, with his staff and three mistresses, leaving his troops to shift for themselves. They fought aimlessly and without orders for a few hours the next day, but suddenly found themselves outflanked, and the slaughter began. Eight thousand pesos wasn't very much really. It wouldn't have lasted the General a week with his style of living, if he had cared to pay for even half of what he drank.

There was probably a ranch he wanted to retire to. But after all it didn't matter, because the troops he deserted were only those filthy Yaquis, and as every decent Mexican knew, the only good Yaqui was a dead Yaqui. But he might have thought about saving their rifles. The Tlaloctepec Indians certainly knew the value of those rifles.

John, deserted by sleep, wondered if his mother was getting some sleep at last, in her little house behind the castor oil trees at the top of his garden. At first she had been able to lend a hand when he probed for the bullets. The Yaquis waited their turn patiently, smoking the cigarettes he had given them. A few of them wore scraps of uniform, but the rest had only the rags of their own cotton shirts and baggy trousers. They stood there silent and pigeon-toed, and watched his fingers working with a steady and indifferent stare. He could not understand them and they spoke no Spanish, so there was no talking. When their turn came they watched what he was doing to them with the same blank fixity and puffed slowly at their cigarettes. For two days his mother stood it, and then she collapsed. It was not the pain she minded so much. But you could guess the kind of life they led from the way they patiently ignored it. Yaquis were flesh and blood. They had sensory nerves just as he had. She knew that they were being hurt as much as a man can be hurt, but it was unimportant to them. It was as much a part of their daily lives as eating and drinking.

The cigarettes now, they were different. When he gave them some, the Yaquis accepted them with a slow, sideways-sweeping gesture of the bent elbow, and then turned the paper cylinders over and over in their fingers, studying them, before they lit up. Then they smoked them slowly down to the last quarter inch, till their lips must have been burnt, silently. A group of them gave him a sense of deep solidity. They seemed to understand each other without the need of words. If they looked back at the road, they all swung their heads round at the same moment. They took their

turns to be attended to without hesitation, as if they had been numbered off. It would only happen like that because they were all thinking the same things together. But what their thoughts were, he could never guess.

His own Indians were a closed book to him, but they were not like these. The villagers had charming, smiling manners. They wished him "buenas tardes" and "buenos dias" and if they had a request they stood before him hat in hand, with a humility so profound that it was hard to think of them as anything but courteous and gentle. But he knew that few of them would hesitate to rob him, cheat him, even murder him for the sake of a few pesos if they thought they could do it safely now that there was a revolution. But these Yaquis showed nothing, literally nothing. They were like automatons, so much so that everything they did was somehow surprising.

And so after two days of those silent patient queues, and the flies buzzing round, his mother had broken down. Since then she had not slept. She had not minded the insecurity that came with revolution. That might last a few weeks or for months, they might lose everything and have to run for it, though it was not likely that they would be killed if they were careful and polite. But now she could not sleep. He could see her light two hundred yards away through the castor oil trees, turned out and then after a few minutes turned on again, like a series of sleepy winks till it was day. He sighed as he remembered how he and his brother Michael had tried to argue with her. She was adamant. It was like arguing with the side of a house, though she was so small. She would not take her sleeping



draught. She hated the heavy, drugged slumber that it caused. She was especially sensitive to it. It put her out for hours as surely as an anaesthetic, she said. That wasn't true, of course. That was just her obstinacy, they knew, the obstinacy that made her refuse to leave her little house and sleep in the room next to his brother's in the main building. He didn't mind that so much. The villagers had a healthy terror of her since the night that she shot the miller's son when he tried to steal a visitor's horse tethered outside her window. They knew that she kept an army automatic and a full bandolier by her bed, and the funeral procession of the miller's son reminded them that she knew how to use them. They hadn't dared to make a vendetta of it, especially as the comisario said the boy deserved all he got.

But now she ought to be sleeping again. The revolution was all but over. A few bands had taken to the sierras, and were being methodically hunted down. All day there had been no fleeing Yaquis to feed and bandage. The villagers were going out again to tend their corn patches on the hillside. There was her lamp, however, burning steadily through the trees.

Fireflies drifted from dark bush to bush outside his window. The plantain leaves nodded and rustled every now and then in a breath of wind. A lizard dislodged a stone from the unbound wall. Some animal uttered a faint grunt. It was useless to try and identify all the sounds that came out of the shadows. Often he had heard a muffled thump on the verandah outside, as if padded paws or a pair of soft sandals had landed on the stone, but in the past when he went to look there had been nothing, perhaps a mango or a papaya lying

on the ground. Now he never troubled to look, even if he heard anything. The random noises had become as much a part of the background as the mechanical chorus of frogs. The frogs, the hissing bird, a dog barking in the village, some other bird with a rasping, grating cry, a horse stamping in the corral, and that grunt again. Contented to be awake but tranquil, to see the steady stars framed in his window, John Finlay amused himself by wondering what made it. It was not a rooting pig of his neighbour's. They were all shut up in the village, and this sound had come from behind the wall towards the lake. Besides it was not vigorous or brief enough. Nor was it a breathy sigh from a cow, nor the anxious snort of a dog digging after a rat and blowing the earth from its nose. He gave it up and looked at his watch, holding it into the shaft of moonlight across his bed. It read twenty past one. His mother's lamp had not once been out.

Sleep had forgotten him for the time being. Well, so long as he wasn't restless, he didn't mind waiting for her. If she'd spent some more time tending to mother I wouldn't mind at all, he thought. He smiled, thinking of sleep as a woman in some sort of nurse's uniform, black probably, and neglecting one patient because she was too busy with another. It was only when she walked out without reason that he was annoyed with her. Perhaps a moonlit night like this was too much temptation for her. Now you're being literary and absurd, he thought, and reached down for his shoes, flashing his torch into the toes in case a scorpion had taken a fancy to spend the night there. If there was a moon to enjoy, he might as well be out enjoying it.

The lake stretched as far as the dim light would permit it out to his left, merging into the faint violet of the mountains at the farther end. Opposite him the Cero del Toro flung its twisted volcanic slopes down to the water, some ten miles away, glowing darkly brown, olive green and black under the moon. Little waves splashed silver on the beach below the wall at the bottom of his garden, where the two adobe huts of his household *mozos* were.

His papaya trees stood up slender and pliant on the other side of the rough wall. He would begin to make money on them soon. He had three thousand of them here, and twelve thousand more up in the mountains, where he could not go alone for more than half an hour in case he was held to ransom. It was irritating. If he could spend a few weeks there at a time, sleeping at the station, he could double the money his hill plantation brought him. But a party of bandits had twice ridden up to the station asking if he were coming that day. Once a boy had slipped out and warned him on the way. The other time he had come up with too many companions, all armed, and the bandits had gone away. He did not know who they were. Very probably he knew them well by sight, faces that smiled and said "*buenas tardes*" to him, and stood humbly, hats held against their breasts, when they came to borrow money. They said they were starving, and yet it was difficult to find *mozos* to help him in the plantations. Thirty *mozos* at fifty centavos a day, forty centavos to plant each tree; two years before the trees bore any fruit. Then he could expect to earn sixty centavos from each tree every year. And at the end of ten years he would have to cut them down.

because they stopped bearing. But a wise man planted the second lot between the rows of the first before they became barren, and then there was no interval without money coming in.

The Indians said he was rich. They said he must have robbed somebody or found an old treasure buried in the mountains to have so much money. They didn't understand saving; that those bright silver pieces were useless and sterile unless they were put back into the land, and that one had to wait for one year, two years, three years before they came back. If the Indians worked their cornland properly, if they irrigated it, they could have several crops in the year. As it was, without manure, only working when they felt like it, painfully planting the grain between the stones they could not trouble to remove from the top of the soil, they reaped twice in the year. They were content to live off the land. He was going to make money.

He heard the noise again, down in the shadows behind the mozos' houses. He walked down towards it, calling out, rather shamefacedly, "Quien?" The last few days must have told on his nerves more than he thought if he was going to challenge Mexican night-noises. There was no reply. Naturally. Only a silence that suddenly struck him as intense. He shrugged. If he had nerves, well, he would not fight them but indulge them a little. They always had the last word. He went back to his room and pulled out his revolver, a five-shot Smith and Wesson. He always laughed at his mother with her enormous Colt. "You can make just as good a hole with a .32," he told her. A thought struck him, and he listened outside his brother's door. It was ajar.

Michael usually snored, but to-night he seemed to be quiet. John hesitated. "I must be slipping," he thought, and went into his brother's room.

The moonlight played on an empty bed, with rumpled pillow and bed-clothes. So Michael had not been able to sleep either. Perhaps he had waked John when he went out. John smiled and turned back to the door. Just inside the jamb was a big nail where Michael hung his rifle. But now the nail was empty. John swung round to the bed. A sheet trailed forlornly on the floor, with a dirty footmark on it.

He went out quickly, on tiptoe, and pulled a torch from the shelf on the verandah. His room and his brother's opened on to the verandah. Then there was a passage running to the back of the house, to the kitchen and dining-room. On the other side of the passage was a spare bedroom, the one they had wanted his mother to sleep in. He went down the passage and found the back of the house empty. So far as he could see, nothing had been disturbed in the larder. He came back to the verandah and stood peering down into the shadows of the chinchillo shrubs behind the mosquitos' huts. If there were any movement, it would be impossible to see it. He heard certainly nothing more. However, if there were anybody there, he had shouted once, and it would be useless trying to stalk them. He ran towards the chinchillos and suddenly switched on his torch. The sharp-edged ray cut through shadows instantly made darker, and picked up a white object lying on the ground, several dark figures huddled round it, and two more standing between it and him, gravely watching him, as they must have been watching him all the time.

Something seemed to lift him above the ground. He felt twice man-size. Every muscle seemed to be trying to burst out of his skin. Blind fury sent him charging forward, roaring like a wild beast. He shot twice into the flurry of figures as they slipped aside into the shadows before his rush, and saw one fall with a sharp spurt of satisfaction. Then he was kneeling beside his brother, as scattering rustles and thumps died into oppressive stillness again around him. Michael was bound hand and foot. A cruel gag of filthy cotton was rammed into his mouth. He was dead, now. Beside him lay the man John had shot, a dark stain slowly spreading over the tattered military tunic, bare toes pointing up to the sky, a broad Yaqui face.

The silence was back now. But after a little the frogs began again with their endless screeching song, like two hard stones being ground together. The bird hissed from the wall. John remembered the little grunt he had heard, and kept his eyes away from the gag. Then his thoughts began racing so fast that he could no longer dream of controlling them.

He stayed there, kneeling, feeling the ground soft under his knees because it had rained that evening, his eyes on the ground where a warrior ant was running in furious circles in the light of his torch. His mozos must have killed a Yaqui. They would remember the house. But he had done nothing. He had tried to help. He didn't know what went on in his mozos' houses. Asking never brought out the truth. Only a flashing smile and agreement with whatever he had said. And his brother had not even been in the village. He had driven into the city sixty miles away in the truck a week before, and had been cut off by the battle. He had

returned that morning. He had said the roads were better because the rains had slacked off. He had been angry because he hadn't taken a spare shirt and had to buy a new one.

The Yaquis must be all around him, waiting. They couldn't have found ammunition for Michael's gun or they would have used it on him. He didn't recognize the dead one. But he might have been among the stragglers he had treated. They would forget that if one of them had been murdered in his house. All Indians were like that anyway. You fed them for a month, and then if you had to leave off they would forget all the other times and bear you a grudge because you hadn't fed them that once. He had fed a lot of people, trying to buy good will in the village when he was building up his business carefully, the business he had sunk all his money in, but it hadn't done much good. And these were Yaquis. They wanted the guns, as well as vengeance. They wanted to get home, and guns meant they would be able to.

He kept his eyes away from his brother. His rage was still high. But again the memories of the past few days kept pushing themselves into his mind, the ragged, patient, bleeding bodies outside his gate, and the dirty thing that had been done in his *mozos'* houses. He would fight and kill the Yaquis if he had to, but he would see that his *mozos* hung. He would kill the Yaquis if he had to, but he would try to get them to go away if he could forget his brother for a moment. He must remember that he was armed and that they had nothing except sticks, perhaps a knife or two. He must keep his light away, out into the bushes, not turned on to what was at his feet. He must think hard

of his mother and what would happen to her if he was rash. The villagers would be no help. They would not fight Yaquis, only cut their throats from behind when they laid down their rifles.

He called out in Spanish, in a forlorn hope "You have killed my brother. You can go now. My men killed one of you. They shall be punished. You may keep the rifle. You can go now." He listened. There was no sound. He remembered how they never seemed to have to speak to know what was in each other's minds. They would have decided already on a plan of action, without words. They would be moving now, carrying out what they had made up their minds to do, either to go away, or to fight him and get his revolver. He could get no sign of their intention either way. He did not believe they understood him, but he called out again "My brother never harmed you. He was not here. We helped you here, and looked to your wounds. If not you, your friends. We gave you cigarettes. Do you remember the cigarettes?"

Silence

Then a stone whizzed out of the darkness and dashed the torch out of his hand. He felt a kind of relief. He could forget the last two days and fight these people. He would kill them with a clean conscience. He could cancel his pity for them. They had no arms, but they challenged him. Well, he was ready. He was going to fight, not only, he felt, the men who had killed his brother, but the whole of Mexico that had picked and plucked and caught his arms from behind when he was trying to build up a living, the *mozos* who wouldn't work; the men who stole; the bandits who lost him half his revenue; the authorities who shrugged and



wouldn't help; the judges who took money and then turned decisions against him because the other side paid more after all; even, strangely, it occurred to him that he was fighting the general who sold his men for eight thousand pesos. They had told him, even Mexicans had told him, that he couldn't beat the country, that it would never let him carry out his plans. Now he had a gun in his hand. He would drive out these Yaquis first. To-morrow he would go out to the plantation and sleep there with a gun, and fight. That was what Michael would want him to do. He would make that his revenge for his brother.

He left the torch where it had fallen. It had done its work and would only betray his position from now on. There was light enough from the moon. He edged out from the chinchillos towards the house. He must get back to his room for more ammunition. He had three shots left, enough to keep off pursuit till he got there. He was not afraid, only aware of the great seriousness of his purpose, which was not just a matter of the moment, but spread out into a whole career.

Clear of the shadows, he started running. Soft footsteps sounded behind him to the right. He swung round and fired at a darting figure that slipped back into the darkness under the trees by the wall. But when he turned he saw movement between him and the house. He had let his thoughts race too long, kneeling there, watching the ant running busily and futilely round, as if the circle of his torchlight had been a prison. The Yaquis had cut him off in that interval. But they would not know he was short of ammunition. He ran again, waiting for a movement before he shot. He was twenty

yards from the house when a body cannoned into him from behind, and a pair of arms tightened like wire round his throat. There was a wave of the acrid Indian smell, that always made him feel sick. He kept his feet, pressed his revolver against a rib and fired. The arms loosened and the Yaqui flopped stupidly to the ground. But when he looked up he saw many figures running out from the shadow of the verandah. There must have been twelve of them, and he had one shot left.

Still he felt safe. While he had that shot no one could catch him, and he could break right and make for his mother's house, where there was plenty of ammunition, and her quick eye to help him.

He ran towards the verandah, and when his enemies bunched to pull him down, swerved sharply to the right and pounded up the path that dived into the clump of castor oil trees. He caught the Yaquis by surprise and left them standing. He heard their heels scattering gravel behind him as they tore into the earth to get off to a quick start. His mother would send them packing when they got within range, and he had a long enough start, though they now were bold, as he had betrayed his lack of ammunition. As he ran he remembered the utter silence in which the Yaquis had fought. Beyond his shots and those desperate footsteps behind him there had not been a sound.

He burst through the trees and into the light from the lamp in the window. He tugged at the door. It was locked. He wheeled round to face his pursuers, and kicked the door with his heels.

"For God's sake, mother," he shouted. "Open up quick. The Yaquis. Quick."

But his mother's obstinacy had given way at last. And she had not lied. She had taken her draught, and would not wake up till shaken out of sleep. Sound passed her by without disturbing her.

He realised it all in a flash, and saw that Mexico had beaten him. It had stopped his mother from sleeping, it had driven her to drugging herself into sleep. And he had one shot left. All this passed through his mind as he gave three kicks on the door. Then he turned to the window. He cocked his revolver. He carefully and deliberately looked for his mother's head, thrown up clearly by the light from the lamp she had forgotten to put out.

## Park Scene

BY DANIEL KALICSTEIN

EACH afternoon I have sat in the park, watching a woman wheel a pram around the fields. To-morrow I am going to find another park in which to while away my lunch hour. I'm sorry. I can't come to these fields again.

It is late autumn now; soon I shall be unable to sit in the parks at all and eat my lunch. There will be heavy, monotonous rains, and frost, and snow. And fog. Old Man Winter will be sitting here on this park-bench, scratching the green paint off with his long, icy nails. No, I shan't be able to come out here any longer (or to any other fields) in the afternoon. I shall chew my cheese sandwiches in the office, and worry over the *Telegraph* Cross-word puzzle, while the typewriter rattles and chatters. Miss Watson will say in her sing-song voice,—Oh, Mr. Seidleman, have you finished lunch yet? (Her thin voice going up and down.) Oh, Mr. Seidleman, can you help me? Oh, Mr. Seidleman, it's one-thirty. (And he himself irritable, still hungry.) Yes, yes, yes, just a moment, just a moment, let me get the cheese off my moustache. Oh, Mr. Seidleman, will you answer the phone. Yes, yes, yes, just a moment. Hello, Kleiners, yes, this is Kleiners. . . just a moment please. Oh,

Mr. Seidleman. Oh, Mr. Seidleman! Oh, Mr. Seidleman!

It's late autumn. These Fields are very lovely now. If I were a poet I could tell you about the pigeons humming, and a fat squat tree that looks like an old black witch, and the dusty leaves falling, frightening me with their ghostly feet—these dead leaves wanting to live. If I were a poet I could tell you—— But I told you, I'm an office worker. I write out thousands of yellow cards each day, and every day the cards are filed in an index, and a month later they are destroyed and all the while I am writing more and more yellow cards, and white cards, and pink cards. It's funny they pay me for this. When I retire in twenty or thirty or forty years' time I intend writing a book about coloured cards. . . I, sir, I, sir, in my youth was the champion card-writer in my firm. I, sir, have perhaps written one million cards in the course of my career as card-writer with Messrs Kleiners, toy manufacturers, phone Ringrose 4229. hello, Kleiners. . . Yes, this is the chief writer of coloured cards. . . I intend writing a book of my life here, etc, etc.

But I want to tell you about the park (they are called 'the Fields') from which I am escaping to-morrow and the woman who wheels a pram through it each day.

The Fields are near my office, and in two or three minutes after I put my pen down I am sitting on a grey park bench, eating a cheese sandwich. That's why I like these Fields—they are so easily got to; and, God knows, an hour goes all too quickly in the afternoon. The seconds are precious. It's strange, isn't it, that so few people realize the charm and comfort

of having lunch in a park in late autumn. I know it is cold, and that the wind is energetic, and the sun up there is a cold, orange balloon. I know that the bench is hard and bespattered with the whitish grey excrement of birds. And who knows, it may rain—this September weather. . . .

And around these Fields a woman pushes a pram each day

Each day, each day, that's what I can't stand about it all. The regular monotony of seeing her and that foolish smile on her face, her lips moving as she talks to herself, her lips moving as she talks to herself . . . her lips moving

I remember when I first began to notice her and recognise her, watching for her. I can't conceive now that once I was interested in her—that I looked out for her, and thought her a character. A character! A foolish woman with a small face and gold-rimmed spectacles, and timidity written all over her. A silly old lady, always wearing the same shabby clothes. The long, dark green coat (not this year's fashion, nor last year's)—and the black fur collar with not too much fur. That ridiculous large round hat, with dirty paper flowers skirting the brim. A character! Why, she was a foolish feathery thing, her hair never tidy, always straggling past her forehead in long yellow-grey strands. And the way she shuffled along, stooping, muttering . . . the idiotic smile beaming across her face . . .

It must have been the background of the Fields that stirred me every time I saw the woman coming round the park, pushing the pram. When I was a small boy I remember one Guy Fawkes night when Eddie (the

boy next door) took out an old pram from his house, and we all stuffed newspapers into it and piled on fish-boxes, and made a huge bonfire. Well, that was the kind of pram it was: old—decrepit.

Everything was lovely and charming. The little lady was giving her child a ride in the park. Probably she lived near the Fields, and this was the daily outing for the child. Lovely—how lovely! I used to muse I remember, on the quiet beauty of it all. The mother wheeling the pram and talking to the child. For she did talk to the child—her lips moved. I'm not sure, but I fancy I heard her mumbling baby talk as she wheeled her pram past my bench

Each day Each day

Honestly, I don't know why this park scene "got me" so I sat on the bench, eating a cheese sandwich, all meltingly sentimental, just thinking that the world was good, that even yellow cards had their uses. Every little thing was good, so long as it radiated life and happiness to somebody, every little thing, me here in this park, a messenger-boy whistling fragments of a jazz-tune, white clothes on a washing-line blowing creamily in the sun, a paper flag beckoning from somebody's lapel, the hiss of a girl's yellow dress, every little thing was good, a woman wheeling a baby in its pram in the Fields

I think—yes, I must have subconsciously forced my emotions. I'd sit back on the bench, and survey the round green turf, and the path encircling it on the outside I would feel sentimental, look at the woman wheeling the pram; and feel sentimental. Feel somehow like taking my hat off to these Fields, and saying, Thank you, thank you for the sun, and for the joy going free

with it, and for the grass, thanks for the humbleness of it all, the humility, the sincerity and the truth. My thoughts would flow out this way.

To-morrow I'm going across to a different park for lunch.

There was a man who sat beside me on the bench some days when there was an empty seat to be had. My lunch hour began at twelve-thirty, so I was always early enough to get the seat I wanted. But at one-o'clock the huge flood of workers from factories and offices oozed out, waltzed into the park to the tune of church bells and factory hooters and shrill whistles, for all the world like groups of ballet dancers, carrying their brown lunch paper bags. This man who sat on my bench occasionally was a one-o'clocker, and didn't always arrive in time to get the seat he wanted. But twice a week, on the average, he'd get on the bench beside me. Now it was autumn, though, there weren't many people in the park.

Naturally, we began to talk. You know how it is: the pigeons come hopping around asking for bread crumbs. We put out our hands and wait for the pigeons to perch on our finger-tips. . . . beg . . . beg . . . beg . . . . Down they go again. They stare stupidly at us for a moment, and shake their heads. And away, to seek new hands, more crumbs. The man and I would laugh together at them, and half talk to each other. In this way people become acquainted. I liked him. Before I knew him to speak to I used to look over his shoulder (he sat sideways—his back half towards me) and peer at the book he was reading. He always read "good old literature," books like *Ivanhoe* and *Tom Jones* and *Adam Bede*, books I've never read and probably never shall, but I always felt pleased at his literary taste, I don't



know why. I liked him very much. I'm sorry I shan't see him again. I shan't be sitting here on this bench after to-day. . . .

One day I spoke to him about the woman who was pushing her pram around the park. I asked him about the woman and the baby. He laughed, put a finger to his temple and shook his head, laughing. I didn't understand. He kept smiling, his brownish-stained teeth grinning. He smiled and tapped his forehead. Then—"Have a look at the baby next time she comes by." He blew his nose, and returned to his book.

I didn't understand. Somewhere in the grey depths of my mind I was trying to think about the baby, trying vainly to conjure up in my imagination what it looked like, a small wrinkled up face, and eyes the colour of . . . Then I realized I'd never caught a glance of the baby. I could only remember the black hood of the pram, and a mass of white clothing.

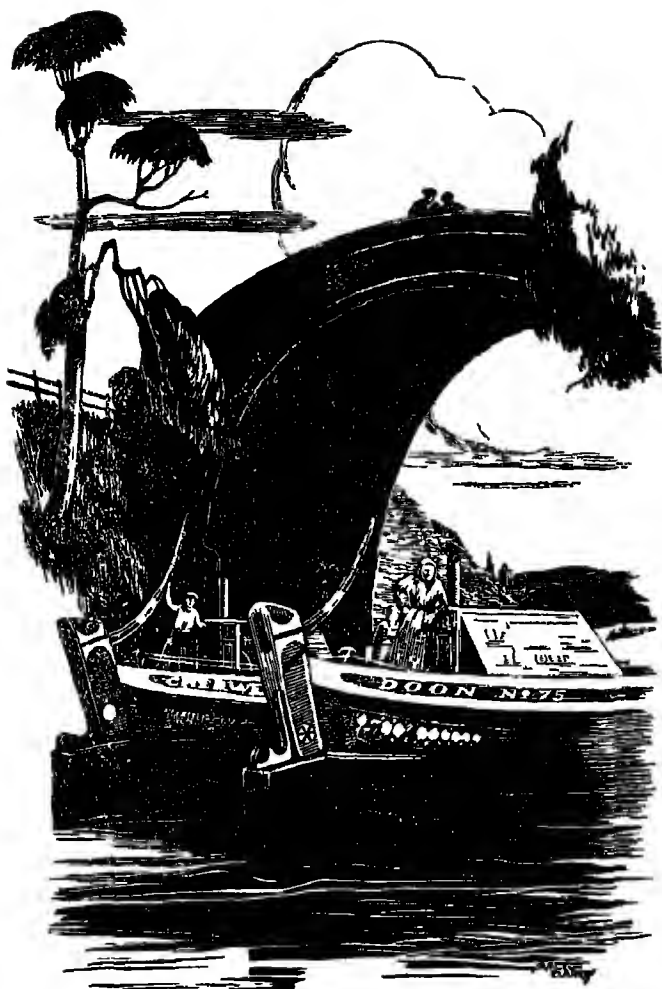
I stood up. The woman came round the path, her gold-rimmed spectacles gleaming in the autumn sun, the paper flowers in her hat bathed in red, she came round mumbling, talking to the baby, bending towards it, mumbling.

I walked by her—across her path, and stood behind as she moved forward.

Inside the pram the stupid marble face of a doll smiled blindly at nothing. The woman bent down, tickling the doll, as mothers play with their children, talking to it . . . she chattered baby language to the doll, mumbling . . .

I'm not coming to these Fields again. There's a much nicer park across the other side of the road. It's only ten minutes away. I'm sick of these Fields, I don't

want the office so near me, I want to have a long walk before I have lunch. And I'm tired of these people here, that old fogey reading *Adam Bede* and that trash. . . . It's the park—it's the park ! You can never get a seat here, and the pigeons always stain the benches with their white grey muck—it's the pigeons—it's the pigeons. . . .



CANAL

*Scraper-board drawing by Victor Clarke*

# The Drunk and the Blind

BY GERALD KERSH

THE name of Cork Concannon stirred up a silted debris of memories. I said to myself. *Concannon, Concannon . . . Cork Concannon. . . .* Then it came back. I had read something about him in a back-number of *Ringside*. When they have exhausted all the celebrities, and all the legendary figures of the ring and the mat, they dig up the forgotten history of some old-time second-rater, like Jim Barry; comb the morgue for a picture, and so manage to fill out two or three pages.

Cork Concannon was a heavy-weight boxer of the time of J. J. Sullivan—one of those mediocrities of uproarious personality, whose whims, quarrels, and vices skyrocket them into the headlines. Concannon had been the perfect type of the wild Irishman. He beat policemen and smashed bars. He had a lunatic vitality, and a crazy kind-heartedness. He tried to stun an ox with one blow of his right hand, and broke two knuckles. He gave cigars to beggars. That was the nature of Cork Concannon; if he had seen a baby crying for milk, he would have shed tears, too, and bought it a bottle of champagne. To-day, he would have been described as a playboy. Ancient photographs of him depict a big, strong, blond man; moustachioed, curiously barbered; clad in tights, and standing in a classic attitude—a

species of boxer as extinct as the brontosaurus. Women adored him So much the worse for him. They were his downfall.

Shortly after his fight with Johnny (Chloroform) Lewis, he was cited as co-respondent in the tragic Ritzer divorce case. The newspapers tore him, tooth and nail A leader in the Chicago *Democrat-Observer* was typical of the public attitude. Among other things, it said.—

“There were no more rules on the boxing ring left for Cork Concannon to break, so he transferred his foul tactics to the forbidden circle of the Wedding Ring There were no more saloons left for this lust-crazed Kerry swine to befoul and ruin, so he took to wrecking homes He broke two hearts at one blow—the first time Cork Concannon ever hit so high The Ritzer tragedy spells the end of this Don Shaun . This amorous pugilist’s only glory is, that he has taken a few beatings from a few better men (It would have been hard to find any much worse) He found a few dollars in his jeans, and rampaged like a bull in a garden What did it matter to him if he trampled down some of our fairest flowers under his dirty hoofs? Back to the bogs, Lothario! We love and admire the Irish, but we do not like their snakes. You are through in America As a boxer you are weak; as a man you are weaker, and as a whole, you are a failure, rotten to the core . . . ”

That finished him He appeared, once or twice, on the stage Audiences hissed him He was seen, down at heels and not well shaved, loitering outside promoters’

offices But nobody wanted him. The rollers were under Cork Concannon—he was sliding away, inevitably, down the dreary gradient of the broken boxer; down and down towards limbo. He struggled, throwing up particles of print; slightly sordid paragraphs about hitting barmen, or being arrested for disorderly conduct Once, he was seen in New York, beautifully dressed again, and holding the arm of a blonde lady of middle age Once, he was picked up in Des Moines, Iowa; wandering vacantly, having lost his memory Then time extinguished his memory; and five years passed, and the War came, and chaos buried everything; and the Peace came, twenty years of it, more terrible than war. Millions had lived and died, a new generation had come Bigger and better men had been lost like stones in the sea. Why, then, should anybody remember Cork Concannon?

Boxers are not important There are thousands of boxers If you go to Chico's Café any evening, you may see a dozen of them Boxers and wrestlers congregate in Chico's They train, or kill time, at Kaplan's Gymnasium, in Old Compton Street, and afterwards avail themselves of Chico's cheap ravioli, minestrone, and spaghetti. Here gather the budding flyweights, the promising welter-weights, the coming middle-weights, and the hopeful heavy-weights—and their counterparts; the flyweights who have blossomed and faded; the welter-weights whose promise has remained unfulfilled, the middle-weights who have come and gone, and the heavy-weights who no longer dare to hope. The boxing profession drips with innocent blood—the blood of fools. The canvas of the ring is greasy with futile sweat He is, relatively, an enormously successful boxer

who makes ten pounds a week Yet, day after day, silly little boys toughened in back-alley skirmishes, cast their eyes on the stars, and kill themselves for a few shillings in local rings.

I was speaking to such a fool in Chico's one evening. This was a youth who called himself Panther Pike of Westminster He could have been no more than twenty years old, but his destiny was already written on his face. Pike must have been a good-looking boy. he had large blue eyes, and wavy yellow hair But his left ear had been pounded into a knot, and the bridge of his nose was gone He weighed, perhaps, eight stone one of those unhappy boys who, praised for their "gameness," rejoice in punishment, and wear their shattered countenances with the imbecile joy of a village idiot flaunting a bright new scarf. Pike was already approaching the stage at which it becomes difficult to focus the eyes He wanted to meet my look, but the pupils of his eyes contracted, flickered, and, after a second or two, swung away. He had a well-shaped head, with a normal brain inside it developed by the usual education but I could see that heavy punching had already begun to dull his wits. He knew exactly what he wanted to say, but between the idea and the spoken word there seemed to be some insidious barrier Idiot! The woolly hand of punch-drunkenness was already upon him, and he did not know it

I said to him: "Why don't you give it up?"

"What? Give what up?"

"This game. You're killing yourself."

"Me? I'm . . . listen I can, whassaname . . . I can take it, see? Kaplan said I was the gamest kid he ever had"

"Game ! Game ! What a fool you must be, to fall for that stuff. Game ! You can take it ! That's just it. You can take it, and you do take it, and where does it get you ? It gets you into the hospital. A proper champion doesn't have to take it—he avoids it."

"Ah," said Pike, "don't be silly "

"Look at you—a cauliflower ear, and a smashed nose, and half your front teeth gone; and you're still only a kid. Then look at Jimmy Wilde, for instance Do you see him with any teeth out, or any thick ears, or a squashed nose ? No Why ? Because he wasn't such a mug as to be proud of taking it Look at Tunney——"

"Ah, don't be a burke !"

"I'm just warning you I don't want to discourage you, but you're no champion You're just a programme filler—one of the 'promising lads ' Have a little sense, and cut it out while there's time Not one man in a million can stand all that smacking around—a man with a solid steel jaw couldn't stand it Every punch on the jaw jolts your brain Your brain——"

"Listen," said Pike, "you're talking a lot of rubbish You know that time I fought whassname. . . ."

"Kid Fisher ?"

"That's right Well, you know what ? After the third round, I didn't know a thing. And I went ten rounds—out on my whassinames, feet ! Kaplan said ——"

"Yes, Kaplan said it was the gamest thing he's seen since Stan Ketchell put Jack Johnson down for a count of nine. Yes, I know."

"Hey, look," said Panther Pike, jerking his head towards the door, and beginning to laugh. "Look who's here."



The swing door was banging shut behind a gross and fantastic creature that stood, blinking and shivering, beside the cigarette-machine. It was a man, an enormous man. There was something ape-like in the hang-dog droop of his head. His eyes were filmed, and half sightless. His jaws moved, slowly, as if he were chewing something. The skin of his pendulous cheeks was reticulated with a fine red network of veins. Under twisted eyebrows his nose, broken by blows and swollen with drink, lay like a trampled egg-fruit. Time had buried him under a mountain of soft fat. He quivered. His gargantuan belly was half covered by a crimson pullover, from beneath which there protruded the ends of a brown cardigan and some crumpled blue shirt. Even his hands were fat—they hung limply in front of him, like bunches of bananas.

"See him?" said Pike.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"Watch," said Pike. He picked up a teaspoon, and struck the sugar-basin a ringing blow with its *Ping!* The fat man instantly started, raised his head, threw out his left arm and crooked his right; advanced a pace, then subsided, staring stupidly from side to side. "Every time you do that, he think's it's the gong," said Pike.

"What is he? A boxer?"

"Used to be. Says he was. Whassiname . . . Cork Concannon."

It was then that the name struck a familiar chord, and I said *Concannon, Concannon . . . Cork Concannon*; and remembered. "Bring him over," I said to Pike.

He sat at our table, drinking a cup of coffee, with much smacking of his fat, trembling lips. Panther Pike watched, grinning. Two or three others came over and sat near him, all watching expectantly. I wish you could have seen that circle of faces. There was a very young, very raw youth, whose name I have forgotten; perpetually grinning, in spite of a thickened upper lip. There was a decaying cruiser-weight called Tullio Falcone; an ex-iceman, whom five years of strenuous fighting had beaten into uselessness. Then there was Pike, cheek-by-cheek with a little squat man whose jaw tended to the right and whose nose turned left. They all stared at Concannon—a group which de Toulouse-Lautrec might have imagined—five ruined faces, between seventeen and sixty-odd years old, and not a profile between them.

“Go on,” said Cork Concannon. “laugh! Go on, laugh. You kids don’t know the first thing, no God damn it, not the first thing about the game.”

“Tell us how you beat . . . whassname,” said Pike.

“Jack Johnson,” said Tullio Falcone, sniggering.

“It wuz not Jack Johnson,” said Concannon, dribbling, “it——”

*Pung!* went a teaspoon against an ash-tray. Cork Concannon jumped, throwing up his left hand. It was in this hand that he held the coffee, which splashed into his face.

Pike sponged him down with a handkerchief, hissing: “Now, now, watch that left, watch that left, Cork!”

Concannon muttered, shivering, “It was a lucky punch. . . .”

“Come on, Cork,” said the squat man, “tell us how you beat Bob Fitzsimmons.”

("Give him another cup of coffee," I said to the waiter )

"I'm givin' away ten pounds weight, see?" said Concannon, brightening, "Well, they tells me: 'This guy's good,' see? So they says to me: 'Cork,' they says, 'it's your big chance, and there's a hundred dollars in it for you,' see? Well, I was flat, see? So I goes to Memphis in Tennessee, see——?"

"Tennssee-see," said Pike, and everybody laughed.

"——I strips. I'm out of condition. See? Well, McManus says to me —'Corky, my boy, watch that right' I says: 'Lissen, doc, I'm all right, all right——"

He stopped, to stir his coffee. Falcone began to fan him with a serviette, in the manner of a second with a towel

Cork Concannon murmured —"I'm okay, doc, I'm okay, doc, he just got me eye. Mop up this cut over me eye, doc. . "

Falcone rapped the edge of an empty cup with a knife-handle The old man started up, shuffling his feet, and waved an arm as fat and lifeless as a half-stuffed bolster. "Break!" cried Pike; and Concannon sat down again

"Come on, Cork, tell us how you beat Dempsey," said the squat man

" Sure So I goes all out, see? Round one, I got him on the ropes, and I'm whaling the living day-lights out of him, when the damn bell goes——"

Pike and Falcone struck the sugar-basin simultaneously Cork Concannon fell into a crouch, holding a bath-bun in his left hand.

"——So I goes back to me corner, and the second the bell goes for the second round, I'm into him again like a

tiger: one-two, one-two; bif—bang! He goes down. I——”

The young boy with the thick lip began to count—  
“One—two—three—four—five——”

The squat man hit the ash-tray, and shouted:  
“Saved by the bell, you quitter!”

“I’m no quitter,” said the old man, “no man could stand up to it like me, and that’s the fact. Jeez, when I fought Whitey Solomons in Seattle—listen, boys, I’ll tell you something. Whitey Solomons was tough, see? He pased hell outa me. See? Besides, I’m out of condition—I’ve been whopping it up with some of the girls, get me? Well, it’s round twelve, see? And I’m pretty bad, but I won’t quit. All of a sudden, Whitey sends over a swing—listen, doc, that swing started on the floor, and landed right on my chin, boss! See? And I don’t know nothing more about it. Then I finds myself in a train, reading about it in a newspaper. See? I’d fought the twenty rounds, out on my feet, see, doc? Unconscious I was, and I went eight more rounds, and you can believe it or not, so help me God in heaven, I won the fight! Yeah, I won the fight unconscious, out on my feet; and I went to the club with some of the boys, and we drank wine all that night, and then I got on the train to Aberdeen Washington. Don’t ask me what for. Listen, youse boys, you don’t know a thing. I can fight unconscious. Honest to God! If I was lying in me grave, and I heard the bell, I’d get up, doc, I’d get up and finish the fight! I——”

*Ping!* went three spoons together, against the sugar-basin. Cork Concannon bounded out of his chair, head down, and shuffled forward, jabbing at space. His coffee-cup, nearly full, emptied itself on the table.

Chico came forward, scowling, and shouted: "Whatta hell you tinka dis is? Whatta bluddahell I say, ha? My nice clin clot! Get outa here, you. Go on, goway out a-here!"

Cork Concannon shuffled out, dazed, shaking his head and muttering. I followed him. From the boxers at the table, there came, faintly, the *ping* of a spoon against a cup, and a roar of laughter. The swinging door cut it short. I touched the old man's arm, and offered him a two-shilling piece. He took it, nodding. For one second, our eyes met. I saw his pupils, flickering, unfocussed, contracting, very similar to the eyes of Panther Pike.

He wanted to say something; but before he could bring his stunned nervous system to operate the muscles of his quivering mouth, the thought was gone.

He turned. I turned. He went his way; I, mine. The city swallowed him. I have never seen him since; nor have I been to Chico's.

## Wedding Down in Georgia

BY LORIMER EYRE

"AM I going to marry you?" she said. The bitter tears were on her lips, her lips were shaking. She was quivering under the sun in the orchard, and the boy could not feel her urgency. He stood there playing with a twig of the apple tree, while she twisted her hat round and round and stood before him like another live tree herself. It was as though nothing would move her. He looked her up slowly, up from her feet in their blunt shoes, up over the soft lines of her legs under their thick skirts, her high waist, her breast, her open neck. . . . His eyes when they met hers were incredulous. His mouth was half open. A lock of hair fell over his forehead—she thought what a terrible boy he was, in his shirt sleeves, in his knee-breeches.

She looked away over the valley. She could not see far, for the trees of blossom stood in her way. She could look over their billowing tops to the further green clouds of the hill, where the oak trees bloomed and the elms were thickening, and the wind only softly stirred their leaves. She could feel herself quivering. She could hardly contain herself. She felt that her legs would collapse under her.

"Well?" Jem Richards looked down. He looked at the leaf in his hand; he uncoiled its little curls. His heart

was thundering under his chest because he did not know what to do. Women were strange creatures. He did not know them. He felt the cloud of sweat on his forehead preventing him from seeing her properly. Why had she come like this? He looked up at her again.

"Jem!" She was fighting back her tears. She took him by the arm, and her fingers nearly sank in to the bone. She pulled herself close to him and looked up into his eyes. He let the twig slip away and looked down at her, lips open, a blush mounting up his steep cheeks.

"Jem—my mother died yesterday, my mother. She died. She's lying there now. There's Ted an' there's Bowen, an' they're waitin' for me, waitin' . . . Jem!" She shook him. Her face was turning into ugliness. There was a line between her eyebrows and two half circles round her mouth. "I've got to have you, Jem! You said you would marry me—it was the understanding, between your father and mine, when I wanted. Well—I want you now, Jem. I can't go back, can't"—Not alone, she could not go back without him.

The boy still stood there. It was so strange to him. He had never actually thought of marrying, of what it meant, nor of being with this girl—he had known her, since a child, at odd times, over at harvest, in the fields—he did not like her. He knew that she did not love him. He looked over the prairie land, over the empty land, over to the distant trees, the enemies on the fringe of the valley, over to the even skyline. Everywhere was empty, no human beings moving. The sky raced on from here right over to the sea, and the white waves beat there on that golden sand, and the sky went

on its racing It raced on and on, and came back again, over this solitary valley again, over these lands and fields

"Well——" He dropped his eyes as he turned them back to her. She saw that he was wavering She knew that he would marry her, there was no one else. But he had to marry her now, this day, had to go back home with her.

For the first time she looked at him He was not so bad a boy. There was even down on his cheeks and no hair on his open chest His arms were slim. She thought of Ted Thatcher's hair, and shuddered, those writhing arms, those molten, brutal squared arms, and that chest—he was a brute He strode over that land as if he owned it, and thrashed his wife, and looked at her without caring, and spoke to her rudely Oh, he was planning—she knew. She knew his schemes

She slipped a hand on the boy's shoulder, under his shirt; she had got to have this boy. The touch of her made him forget himself. He pulled her to him, convulsively—then found himself looking down at her again, with his own eyes, looking down at her so surprisingly near to him, so suddenly in his arms And he laughed; it was so surprising. He laughed down at her And she looked up into his eyes perplexed There was no laughter in her eyes. She was feeling sick inside her, weak, with the crying that she had done, with the horror of that black house where the coffin lay, where the white face of her mother had lain, where her white body had slept.

"I'll marry you!" the boy said. "I'll marry you!" His voice was shouting though he did not know it. The



girl looked at him frightened. The birds flew out of the hedges at the sound of him, following the stream of their calling notes with their swift wings. "I'll marry you!"

"Not so loud," she whispered. For there was his father. . .

He took her against his lean thighs, lifting her up. She felt her own heart quicken. He held her up to his face his head thrown back, and made her bend down and kiss him. He laughed, this happy boy—she twisted his curl. But there was still misery in her heart.

"Listen, Jem—put me down. Listen!" Her skirts rucked against her, and she straightened them, sitting down on the round seat round the apple tree. The boy was standing in front of her again, sheepish again, he did not know what had come over him to pick her up like that. . . .

Her face was very grim. She held herself rigidly.

"Listen to me. Look at me!" She leant forward, hands tight on her lap. "Look at me! You've got to persuade your father that you're coming with me to-day." He looked up sharply.

"But——" There was the grafting that he was doing, the little boat he was carving for——

"You're coming to-day," She felt she could hit him. She looked at him unemotionally, blankly, a dull stare in her eyes. "You've got to come to-day. I can't live here. I can't go back alone. Don't you see? You've got to go with me. That's what I came for—to take you back with me. You've got to come."

The boy looked at her half frightened. This strange woman . . .

"How old are you?"

"Er—sixteen," he stammered. She looked at him, satisfied. He would do for her. He would be easy.

"I'm eighteen. Now, that's just right, sixteen an' eighteen. You must come with me to-day, Jem Richards. We can be wedded in front of your father. You must pretend you've been courtin' me these weeks an' keepin' it from him. You've got to look happy——" She could not help smiling at his look of misery. "Come here! Kneel down!" She poked up the corners of his mouth with her finger, then held them there with her spread hand. "That's right!" He was beginning to love her. She felt suddenly very sick. She leant back and turned her head away against the tree-trunk. The wind blew her hair. The boy looked up and wondered at what he had got hold of, this girl, this female thing that he had never seen. He felt his pulses quickening.

"Shall I go in an' tell father?" he asked.

"You will."

He went slowly, looking back, then away up to the house where his father was. He would probably be out in the fields. . . He felt frightened. How could he go to his father and say—how could he go and live with her, a strange person? There would be no Ella to look after him, no—no anything. He would be absolutely alone, alone with her. . . He paused at the cherry-tree. He ducked his head under it and stared down at the orchard, then back up to the faded verandah in front, he felt his heart beating. He slipped his hand inside his shirt and cupped it over his breast; he was very young. The sweat was running from under his arm. He hitched

up his breeches, strode over to the wooden steps, hands in his little pockets. He stopped and looked up at the sky before going in, looking up at this dazzling sky with the blazing sun before him, as though he might never see it again.

"Is father in?"

"Ay, he's in the working room, Mist' Jem." He hung round the old woman. His boots rang on the wooden floor. He straddled over the rug and kicked it with his foot. He went and looked out of the tiny windows.

"I am going, Miss Ella," he said. The old woman looked at him over her glasses. She coughed and blew into her thimble. A bird flew across the square of the verandah; they could hear it chasing in the bushes. The earth was very dry outside. It looked like white powder against the green of the turf.

"Is father in, then?"

"I said he was in, Mist' Jem—I don' unnerstand—what did you say?" The boy did not know *how* to say it, he did not know *how*—he was frightened, terrified.

He marched up and down, swaggering along. He did not know how to say it. It did not seem true. It did not seem that it was happening to him. He thought of the girl sitting there.

"I'm—I'm going to get married, Ella!" They stared at each other in surprise.

"Eh?" The old woman blew into her thimble with a piercing sound; she kept looking down at it, up again over her spectacles, down again, then up.

"Yes. I'm—she's, she's outside—Miss Pauline. . . ." The boy wished he could throw himself against this old woman, lay his head on her broad knees. He

wished he had his mother here . . . He looked at his old nurse helplessly.

She was smiling, all over her face. Every little crinkle wrinkled, every curve of her face was smiling. She was shaking, happily. She could not speak. She jerked with her thumb over to the door; she saw none of the distress in the boy's eyes.

"Go on—go an' tell your father, Mr. Richards," she was whispering; he was in the next room. He was down that little corridor, the boy thought, down in the working room. He pulled on his coat, jerking it over his shoulders, looking towards the working room, wondering what he was to say. The old woman saw the sweetness on the boy's face, the beauty of his cheeks with his mouth open like that—she sighed.

His boots rattled on the boards. He could see out over the side of the house where the woods came down to the level. The orchard was hidden now, round the curve of the front. He could see the hills that he loved, the trees, the fields. They were his, they would all be his, one day. He loved them all; how could he leave them?

"Hullo-o, Jem! Not out shootin'? Trouble is there?" The old man was cleaning a gun. His face was weather-beaten, red. He did not look at his son as he spoke.

"Yes, Mr. Richards—er—no. No!" He came in and edged his way to the table, looking round, picking up a barrel and beginning cleaning it. His hand ran up and down the silver shining metal; the ring on his finger glinted and sparkled—he was proud of that ring.

"I've—er—Pauline's outside, Mr. Richards."

"Pauline?" The man looked up at him slowly. His blunt face was not comprehending, steel, blue eyes not seeing. Then they burned into life. "Pauline! That girl. What's she here for? Is there trouble?" Always trouble was in Mr. Richards' thoughts, trouble—it was in all their thoughts. Trouble could come out of these woods here, slip over the top of the valley without any of them seeing.

"No father—er—yes! Her mother has died."

'Old Mrs. Bailey, now—so soon after the man!'" The eyes that looked into his son's were full of pain. Life was so precious, like a secret jewel, like a secret perfume in the palm of the hand. There was not enough life in this valley, not enough life to let even one old woman die without it being a terrible loss. The old man straightened himself. He looked out of the window. His face set, as he stared across the fields.

"We all die someday," he said. He was conscious of death coming very close to him. He had known dear Ben Bailey since a lad; they had started out together. And he had died. They had never seen enough of each other, he had not been as kind to old Ben Bailey as he might have been—his hand tightened on the chair. And now his widow. He realized suddenly that he was getting very old himself. He turned round to look at his son, with a strange look in his eyes. His son was magnificent standing there, a beautiful boy, so straight, like a hazel tree, like a birch, like the silver poplar tree. He was so beautiful, too beautiful for him and Sarah to have created. He was a being from another land.

"Son——" the words were choking in his throat. There had never been much emotion between the two of them before. The man looked at the boy with a proud

smile on his face and tears in his eyes. "You must get married, son, you must wed her. Our family is a fine one, you must have children, son. I am an old man. . ."

"Father—Mr Richards, sir——"

"It don't matter if I die. It don't matter. But if you die——You must marry——" He looked out of the window feeling the beauty of this earth. This earth was his possession, the heirloom of the family, the precious gift in the palm of the hand. It was not for any other family to take it, it was theirs, his, his son's, his descendants'. The old man beckoned to the boy with his finger. The lad slipped the barrel back onto the table. His feet dragged as he came round the corner. His father put an arm on his shoulder. They stood looking out over the bright fields.

The land raced up to the sun. The downland turf was like painted green. The deep purple shadows of ploughed earth were like dark rivers underneath deep banks.

The old man tightened his arm round the boy, and he felt him quivering. The boy felt suddenly all that he had to lose. He had to go from here, from his father, this house—how could he? But then he thought of that dead face down in the orchard, that girl whose eyes were frightening.

"Father—Mr. Richards—she, she wants me to be marryin' her, to-day. . . ." The old man did not hear what he said. He was still thinking of these fields. He was smelling the blossom out there from the chestnuts, the sharp prickle of pine-needles, hearing the crunch of a footstep on the mossed turf where the soil was broken and cracked.

"Does she ? Docs she ' To-day ? What——"

"It's her mother, Father—I—it's the farm. She wants me to go back with her " The man looked at the boy without seeing, firm eyes in his thoughts.

"Trouble, eh ?" he said slowly, looking at his son slowly The boy twisted his hands The father laughed He looked back over his shoulder out of the window again and pulled on his coat.

"Why did ye not bring her in ?"

"She—she came suddenly, Father " She had stolen up like a thief.

"But—to-day ?" The old man was slowly comprehending. He looked at his son sharply The boy wanted to tell him, wanted to tell him, how frightened he was, that woman was strange, older than he

"We've, we've been courtin' each other, Father——" He was uncontrollably trembling He put a hand on the table to steady himself, and smiled.

"Eh, ye have ? Ye sly one ! Ye sly fox ! I might a' known it !" He smiled at his son as though his son were a man, and punched him softly on the chest, and took him by the arm, and brought him out to the verandah. Ella had slipped away.

"Where is she ?"

"Pauline ? She's—out there !" He pointed to the orchard The old man looked at him a moment

"Well, bring her in, son—bring her in." It left him perplexed He could not grasp.

The boy went slowly, down the gravel. He looked back and saw Ella moving upstairs, her white face through the windows He could see someone moving over in the fields, like a silent fly the other side of a pane

of glass, no sound came, no depth of movement, just a moving shadow against the larger earth. He came down slowly, round the bend of the trees. He felt that he was living in a dream, all days were like a dream, in this country. His father acted as though he was in a dream, ever since his mother had died.

He expected to find the girl sitting down still, leaning against the tree as he had left her. But there was nothing of her there except her footmarks upon the ground, and he felt a great relief, perhaps she had gone. He had imagined it. She had never come. He would go back and say that no one had ever come, it was his imagining. And his father would believe him. He would look at him, hardly understanding, and nod his head and say "Oh ay," then look at him again sharply, then smile as though afraid of being thought not to understand. And Ella would tuck his bed as usual, and he would go out with the dogs after supper, and he would sail on the lake, and sit by his father, and they would go up to bed with their lanthorns, and——

But there she was

She was sitting in the pony-cart looking out over the road. She looked back at the sound of his approach, looking him up and down.

"Haven't you brought your box?"

"N-no . . ."

"But——" she leant forward and stared at him half furiously, half entreatingly—"I thought you were coming? You said——"

"I've been seeing my father." He stood by the edge of the cart leaning against a wheel, scraping his finger nail, looking up at her and dropping his head. "You didn't mean it, did you? Don't cry! Don't——" Her



tautened nerves had given way and she was huddled up sobbing, while the boy clambered up and tried to quieten her.

"Look at me ! Look at me ! I'm going to marry you. Yes ! Really ! I am. There's nothing to cry about. I've only been telling father——" He felt completely alone. There was not even now a stern girl to look up to, to tell him what to do. He was entirely alone. He felt that he was giving his life away because it had to go, it was not himself, it was someone else—what did it matter ?

"He wants to see you." She looked up quickly, staring at him a moment. Then she screwed up her face and began wiping her eyes, wiping her nose, smoothing her hair.

"Quick then—get down ! I can't get down before you do." Hurriedly he jumped down, turning back to—but she had jumped down without him. She smoothed her skirts and was off up the path before he could follow. He had to run after her a little way. She strode on, hands clenched down by her sides, walking squarely up to this big house, trying not to think of what was happening to her. She had got to get all this over before she gave way. She had to go through with this mockery. She had to persuade this old man that she loved his son. She had to persuade him to let the boy go with her. She had got to have the boy.

The boy followed her miserably. She was so forbidding, so harsh. He could not see the misery in her eyes nor the deadness of her moving. He could not see how she was ready to scream. She had got him by the hand—they were nearing the front door—dragging him

after her. He could not understand why she wanted him. Why could she not let him be? Why could she not let him alone?

And yet he felt a rush of feeling for her, fright of her, awe at the mystery of her, excitement at being with her. It was incredible, that they two total strangers should be going to be one together, to be man and wife. It was absurd. He had thought of love, how he would marry a girl. He would love as he had loved his mother. She would look after him like a mother. She would care for him; but this girl——

“You will love me, won’t you?” he said rather wistfully. It frightened him terribly, the idea of living with her if she was not going to love him. He would be all alone with her, no father. . . .

She looked at him quickly. She saw his alarmed, startled eyes, his quick lips, his leaping chest—she pulled him to her hurriedly and kissed him on his soft cheek, feeling the lock of his hair against her forehead, her moistness of his mouth.

“Yes! Yes—give me time,” she said. “I’ll love you! Come on.” They went hand in hand up to the porch.

The old man was looking at them. He was greatly proud of them. To think that his son—and Pauline too, the beauty, the belle of the country. He was not thinking that there was no other belle in this country; he was not remembering that. He strode forward and took the girl’s hands, and squeezed them, and led her up into the shade.

“Ye’ve had trouble, my dear, I’ve heard,” he murmured, putting a footstool for her. “It’s my deep sorrow. Ben Bailey was one of my greatest friends,

and now his widow       " The boy was standing by the porch, one foot on the step. He leant against the pillar looking out into the sun. He was looking at the mulberry trees and the laurel bushes, the land that he knew. He felt his heart beating to think what was going to happen to him—he found himself looking at Pauline secretly, with new eyes.

She was beautiful. She sat there with all her courage screwed up, trying not to cry before she had arranged all this trouble. She had to settle this trouble. She had to go back with Jem Richards with her.

"I want to marry him," she said coldly.

"Yes, yes——" it was not right, he thought, for a girl to be so—but then her mother; it was understandable. He saw how trembling she was. He tried to look at her as little as did his son, they both glanced at her, fascinated, then away again, but their eyes strayed back. She was so rare.

"You see—there's the men there an'—— Well, I'm alone now. They——" Her handkerchief twisted in her hands. She could not convey to them Ted Thatcher's face nor—it was all so clear to her. She felt that she was rehearsing an argument which she had used over and over again; it was quite cold now. She had to have someone, she said; the men were not kind. She was frightened of being alone there, yet she could not leave the farm. With Jem Richards—and perhaps Mr Richards would come over in the week, to make sure, to help them, so that they could tell the men. It would be easy with Jem Richards, the men knew Mr Richards whereas she—they only knew her as a little girl. And she had always loved Jem, she had always wanted to marry him. They—yes, they had been seeing one

another lately. . . . She gulped, she could not steady her voice. The tears crept in as she spoke. She was thinking how they ought to have been seeing each other lately, how their true love ought to have run; how there ought to have been love, like the love in the story-books. And this was her romance, this wavering bargain.

"And so, if he'll come I'd—I'd—be only too—willing to—have him—er——" it was the queerest topsyturvydom the old man had ever heard.

"Eh, well—em——" Well, times were changing. Young ladies did things now which—he realized suddenly that this was the only young lady concerned. There were no other young ladies, hereabouts. The valley was empty of them. It was this young lady or no young lady. There was no picking or choosing for either of them. They had to marry each other. The old man coughed. He realized that what the girl was doing was the only thing for her to do, to propose herself.

He smiled at his son. There were tears in his old eyes again. He realized the terrible risk that his family, that their families, were running. The two families were reduced to these two people, one boy, one girl, out of these two the whole of their races had to spring, or else their fine name and family would end.

He took them by their two hands, pulling the boy reluctantly forward. And the girl felt the sticky hand of the boy hot in hers, and hers was very warm. They stood there, and her eyes were closed; she felt like fainting. The boy was staring at her, mouth hanging open. She felt that she wanted to tell him to shut it. Yet she felt a pity for him. It would be fun to have him

about her, to have him running round her—she did not know what he was thinking

As his father pronounced the blessing he was wondering whether Pauline would be an Ella to him. Would Pauline tuck him up—or perhaps——

They stood staring at each other.

## Rogation Days

BY EISDELL TUCKER

HAD we invoked the West Wind for favour,  
or slit throats at the rising of the sun  
as our fathers' fathers had done,  
there would be no rust in our orchards  
and no smut in our wheat.

Had we poured libations to the Full Moon,  
or the New with her cowslip-coloured bow,  
we should reap the crops that we sow,  
we should gather where we plant and where we covet  
we should set our feet.

Who is this who has stolen our altars,  
with the sun for a nimbus and the moon  
for an orb and the sky for a throne?  
sitting among the stars in their choirs,  
between us and our desires.

## “ Now We'll Eat ”

BY HENRY MEADE WILLIAMS

I'LL never forget the expression on Joey's face when I said, “ Well, I'm going to do it ”

She was nursing the baby and when she turned, the nipple left Bill's mouth with a little noise like “ slup ” and his hands went into the air and waved in jerky circles. Joey's neck was thin and a cord made a deep shadow, like a bruise. I saw two expressions, the one she had before I spoke which was bitterness—a sad anger, then, when the words sunk in, I saw the other slide over her face, her eyes becoming large, her mouth stiff and hard. All the fear which we had been thinking about, the pride which we had nursed along were in that expression

“ You can't do it, Martin, ” she said. There was fear even in her voice.

I knew I could do it—I had to do it—but I wanted to hear her say that, it gave me more strength. Somchow it seemed better to have her believe we hadn't reached the point of stealing yet.

“ It's all set, ” I said

She looked at me. I didn't like to look at her. She was so thin and greenwhite and her eyes were so big.

Bill began to cry. He opened his mouth and his eyes went tight shut. She daddled him as he lay there

on a towel on her lap and her knees jerked up and down and Bill's cry came out in irregular lumps

"Go on, feed him," I said. "He can eat."

Joey kept on jouncing her knees and every once in a while her heel would tap on the bare floor. She stared at me. Then she smiled—her whole face went soft and she dropped her eyes to Bill

"That's right," she said. "He can eat."

She drew him closer to her—turning him on his side, her arm pressing against his back. Bill kept on crying until his mouth found her breast and he stopped with a little contented gurgle.

Joey laughed. So did I. "That shuts him up all right," I said.

I didn't want to laugh, but when I did I felt better.

I went across the room to the bed. Virginia was asleep, doubled up, her face in the pillow. I turned her over and she stretched, her body trembling.

"Let her sleep," Joey said. "She's been fretting all afternoon."

I put her down and saw her thin, white arm fall back over her head. She licked her lips

"I've got something for her," I said.

In my pocket I had a small dried tangerine I had picked up on the way through the janitor's basement. I washed it off and peeled it. Virginia ate it in sleepy silence, her eyes roving about the dimly-lit room. In another pocket were two baked potatoes. I fixed them up a little.

"That's not so bad, Joey," I said, looking at the dish. "You ought to eat it—it'll do you good, on account of Bill." I looked around the room. "Well, I guess I'll be going."



Joey didn’t lift her head. She was looking down at Bill.

“Good-bye,” I said.

Joey looked up. She brushed back a lock of her hair which had flopped down over her face as she bent over Bill.

“You going now?” she said. Suddenly she got up and put Bill down on the bed and came over to me. She looked at me for a moment and I knew what was coming.

“Go and see Larry again,” she said.

I shook my head.

“He’ll help us again, I know,” Joey said.

“I don’t want to see Larry,” I said.

“It’s better to see him, Mart, than do this. He’s still got his job”

“Has he been hanging around again?” I asked

Joey shut her eyes and said, “Please, Martin, don’t be crazy.”

“Crazy? I’m not crazy.” Then I felt sorry, and said so, and I saw Joey go back to Bill and pick him up. She began smiling at Bill. Then she looked up at me and said casually, just as if I were going to go down street, “Don’t forget the oatmeal, Mart?”

I went downstairs. We were living on the top floor. It had been a loft or a storage room and when the rent went by for four months, Mickle, the superintendent, said we could live in the “pent house” “It’s all right,” he said, “I’ll put in a stove for you.”

I had a very simple plan. I had been thinking about it for two weeks, mulling it over, at first as a wild scheme, never to be taken seriously. But as the days

went by and I couldn't get any work and I couldn't get any food, that is, it got harder and harder to get relief food, there were so many wanting it and not enough to go around, I began to work out this scheme in detail, always in the end brushing it away—laughing at the idea of such a thing.

For two years I had worked as a clerk in a branch of the C & D Groceries Stores on 12th Street and Eighth Avenue I got eighteen a week, then fifteen, then twelve—then the air.

There were two doors to the store—which wasn't very big—the front door and a back door that opened into an alleyway. We used to pile empty fruit crates, cardboard boxes and paper outside there. There was a toilet built against the building but not connected with it except by a small window which opened into a closet in the store in which we kept our coats during the day and hung our aprons at night. Smoking was not allowed in the store so when things were quiet one of us would slip out in back and smoke. Sometimes I would look up at the building in back and feel all the windows staring down at me. There was a narrow passageway between the building and a warehouse and I could see people passing at the far end in the sunshine. Sometimes going home I'd go through the alley and come out on Eleventh Street which was filled with children playing games.

My plan was to open the little window in the toilet and crawl through into the store. That was all.

There was always a light burning over the cashier's desk all night. Sometimes there would be money in the register, small change, but never over ten dollars

Since I was going only for food I wouldn't have to go

in the front part of the store at all and could keep down low behind the counters in back. Danny, the cop on Twelfth Street, couldn't see a thing way in back there, unless he stopped and actually peered in.

The door of the house slammed shut behind me with its hard, clanking sound. There were only a few people on the street, a man in a big overcoat standing by the railing of the basement of the house opposite talking to someone below, two boys smoking cigarettes in the lighted hallway of the building and a woman walking down the sidewalk toward me. Her heels echoed sharply. J. Bransky, the tailor was closing shop. I saw him through the must covered window put on his coat, take off his glasses and slide them into the breast pocket and reach for the electric light string. Then I heard his door rattle and I stepped back into the dark and watched him scuttle up the steps and walk down the street, his breath following him.

I buttoned up my coat, clipped down the steps and walked along the street past Magnorcci's Delicatessen shop, past Waldon's Bakery, Santiago's butcher shop and Manny's drug store and a row of empty red brick buildings until I came to the corner of Ninth Avenue. I stopped for a moment and watched the El go by, all yellow-lighted and roaring.

Someone walked up behind me and said, "Hello, Martin "

I jumped and turned. My heart was beating fast. I looked at Larry

"Hi," I said.

He was looking at me in a funny way. "You tight?" he asked

"No," I said. "I'm not tight."

"You look it, kid."

"Do I?"

"Do you! You look tight or sick. What's the matter?"

"Nothing," I said.

"Everything all right?"

"Sure"

"Any chance for a job yet?"

"Maybe," I said. "I might get one soon."

"We miss you at the store," Larry said.

"Yes?"

Larry took out a pack of cigarettes. He offered me one. I don't know why I did it but I heard myself say, "No, thanks"

I felt Larry looking at me.

"All right," he said. He lit his cigarette. I saw the paper match box, with C & D in gilt lettering on white. There were always several big packages of them under the counter for our tobacco customers.

"What you doing?" Larry asked.

"I'm taking a little walk," I said

Then he said, "How's the kids?"

"They're all right," I said.

"And Joey?"

I looked at Larry. He was standing there perfectly naturally waiting for the answer.

I said, "She's all right."

Then he looked at me in that funny way again. "Listen, Martin," he said, seriously, his brows coming together, his eyes bright with seriousness. "Watch yourself. Don't do some fool thing."

“Thanks,” I said. I wanted to get away. “Well, so long.”

He said, “Good-bye, Mart.”

At the other side of the Avenue I turned. He was still standing there, looking across the street at me.

I felt hot under my coat and kept wondering why I should run into Larry of all people. And as I walked up Eighth Avenue, newly paved and broad, with the rumbling of the subway below, I remembered Larry saying when I was fired from the store, “Don’t let it get you, kid. Something will turn up.” Larry was always cheerful and good. Sometimes one of the boys would swipe a package of cigarettes from the store and Larry would talk to him like a Christer. Once he tried to get one of the clerks to lay off drinking, and he got the laugh. But he didn’t seem to mind it, and when the same man was sick it was Larry who went around to see him and brought him stuff to help him. He was funny. I was never sure of Larry—I didn’t know how far this goody-goody part of him would carry.

And then suddenly, I was there, on Twelfth Street, walking right by the store. I saw the bright light above the cashier’s desk. I had come around in front first to make sure no one was inside and also to see if the aisle between the counter and the shelves was blocked by the usual cardboard poster of the list of the new prices. I stopped and looked in. The familiar objects in the store gave me a funny feeling. Then I looked at the poster. It was there all right, and it was high enough to shut me out from the view of anyone looking in the window.

On my way around to Eleventh Street and the alley, I passed the fruit store which had opened up after I was

fired. I saw the fat Italian proprietor, his dirty-aproned stomach bulging over the little counter as he read a newspaper. There were a row of orange crates outside, the oranges glistening in the light from the shop window.

I reached the alley and started to enter it when I heard someone walking down the street. I bent over to tie my shoe. When I leaned over that way the blood rushed to my head and I felt dizzy. Little glints of light fell away in all directions from the centre of my eyes. I put my hand out and held myself up against the building.

The man passed by without even noticing me. But I couldn't stand up right away, the building kept leaning over on me. Far down the street toward Seventh Avenue I could see the lights of the moving picture theatre and the shiny backs of several cars parked at the kerb.

I had to have a cup of coffee

At Herman's lunch, Herman shook his head. He was friendly, but he kept shaking his head and saying, "I can't go on, Martin. I can't, honest."

"Listen, Herman," I said, "I don't want anything, only a glass of water, that's all."

"Sure, Martin," he said. He slid a thick tumbler over the polished mahogany. Then he drew a cup of coffee from the cooler and placed it in front of me. I looked up. He winked. "It's all right," he said.

He reached under the counter and pulled out a piece of paper and a pencil. "I want to show you something, Martin," he said. "Look here."

It was a long list. He drew a line and sucked the end of the pencil. He mumbled something to himself. Then he put down a figure. "Look," he said.

The total was fifteen dollars. I never knew that

Herman kept track that way I didn’t know what I expected when I bumped coffee and sandwiches from him or got milk for Virginia. I guess I expected him to put it down, but I didn’t think it would be like that.

“Christ ! Fifteen dollars !” I looked at the list. “I didn’t know it was that much, Herman.”

He shook his head. Herman was always half smiling, and it was hard to tell how he felt. He had a broad, pale face that sometimes had a greenish colour to it. He said, “It’s a lot for me, see ? I can’t go on. When you think you can fix it ?”

I didn’t say anything.

“That’s the last I can do, Martin,” he said, when I had finished the coffee and pushed it back.

“Don’t worry,” I said. “Don’t worry.”

He looked sideways at me, “I can’t go on,” he said. It was colder when I walked outside.

This time I went straight to the alley and right down it. It was dark behind the buildings. I could smell the familiar wet-paper smell from the boxes piled up in the yard. I heard a cat or a rat scamper off the boxes. Then I looked back. The tall building had only the stairway light lit—a long row of yellow and black blocks going up in a column.

I walked across the yard, feeling my way, until I came to the walls of the C & D building. I heard the water dripping in the closet and as I edged along the wall I felt with my toe the crack in the concrete floor into which I used to toss burnt matches. That meant that I was only a few feet from the door. When I reached the door I bent down and peered through the key-hole. I could see only a small portion of the room, a bit of the floor, the panel of one counter and the black show

window far down at the other end, with a section of the white lettering, THE C & D STORES—GROCERIES, in reverse.

I reached for one of the boxes and stood it on the seat of the toilet. It wobbled I wrapped my handkerchief around the wooden handled screwdriver and tapped the glass gently, right near the top of the lower half of the window

It seemed to vibrate and echo in the store I heard a window open in the building behind me I waited for a long time, balancing on the box. Then I began again

This time I cracked the glass A small piece fell in, clattering to the floor. Again I waited. I could hear the sound of that glass crashing in my brain so loud that it drowned out all the noises of the city. Through the hole in the pane I could smell the warm bread-and-vinegar air rush out from the store.

Then I began working on the glass again I made a hole big enough for me to put my hand through I bent my wrist until my fingers found the latch. It turned easily with a little scraping sound

Slowly, carefully, I began to press up against the window. It wouldn't move. I tried lifting I couldn't budge it. I gave it a thump and as I did so the box slipped and I fell off the seat. I made a hell of a noise falling. I sat there until I had counted a thousand without hearing anyone.

Probably when I gave the window that extra push I had loosened it, for when I worked on it again it went up easily.

I climbed in.

I could smell the aprons and feel their cold stiffness as I fumbled for the door knob.



I didn't open the door. I stopped myself in time. It had occurred to me that anyone passing by on the street and who happened to be looking in would see the door open. It would be funny to see the door open, and they would stop to look. It had to be opened very slowly; so slowly that unless someone had actually stopped to watch it would not be noticed.

I did that and crawled out on my hands and knees into the store. I left the door open behind me. It wasn't a good plan to open and close it too many times.

I was in the aisle of the counter now. It ran a long distance to the cardboard poster at the end. Beyond the poster was the show window. I remembered once working with a scene-shifting gang and I was late in getting something off the stage and I felt that the curtain was going up any moment. The curtain was the only thing between me and all those people out in front.

I sat down, my back against the counter and rested. The light over the cashier's cage at the end of the other counter was bright enough for me to make out the labels of the goods on the shelves in front of me. I was among the soaps and could smell the strong acid of some of the cheap cakes. I edged along the aisle. I knew just how far I had to go.

Then I heard a slight noise in the store. I stopped breathing. Then I heard it again. It was a low vibration, and it came from the end of the counter. I looked at the poster. And I saw the poster move. I started to crawl back to the closet, keeping my eye on the poster, which was still swaying.

Suddenly the poster fell forward, and across it, Tim, the store cat, walked confidently toward me, its back arched, its long tail twitching. Tim was purring.

As I lifted my eyes I saw the black pane of the show window with the lights of the buildings across the street and the flash of an automobile's shiny body as it passed by.

I couldn't move I crouched there feeling like someone facing a machine gun that hadn't started to shoot yet Any moment someone might walk by

I began to retreat slowly, crawling backward, always watching the window Once, as I started my knee back, a man sauntered by, I could see the smoke from his cigar float after him All I wanted in life then was to get back to the closet, to stay in the dark—away from the muzzle of that machine gun.

Then the idea of using the large bread-baskets came to me I knew there were always two or three empties at the back end of the counter They were big, open basket-work affairs.

I got back to the baskets without having seen anyone pass the window again.

I shoved two baskets, one on top of the other, in front of me down the aisle, very slowly, an inch at a time. I could see through the slits of the weave, if I kept my eyes close to them, and when I saw someone start across the window, I stopped and waited It was very slow work, but I felt safer behind my movable barricade

After a time I reached the canned meats. Directly in front of me, as I squatted there facing the shelves was a special variety of chicken, in a triangular can. Sixty-seven cents Yes, mamm Anything else? Wrap it up for you? I took the can down and laid it on the floor beside me. I took the can from the back of the row, so that it would not be noticed.

Systematically I filled my list of things we needed most. Some were such harmless things that I began thinking I wasn't doing anything out of the ordinary. Cereals, canned milk, fruit juices, cocoa.

I gathered up my pile and took it out in back and put it in a box and put the box well in the shadow of the building. I made two trips and filled the half of another box. They weren't too heavy yet to carry suspiciously. I went back for the rest.

When I leaned forward to look for something on the shelf I saw a movement out of the corner of my eye nearest the baskets. I turned and squinted through the slits. I saw the movement again. It was the swinging of an arm just outside the window. It went from side to side.

I changed my position and I could follow the arm up to the shoulder. It was the front of the shoulder in a dark blue coat. I moved along the slits and I could see the entire figure: the shiny buttons, the policeman's shield, the top of the cap just below the reversed letter G in GROCERIES on the lower line, the lifted face staring with intense eyes at the bread-baskets. It was Danny, the cop. It was almost as if Danny's eyes were looking right into mine.

I eased back and sat there. I could hear people talking outside on the street and the rushing swish of passing cars.

I knew that my barricade had attracted Danny's attention and that his suspicions were increased by the open door of the closet. I began to crawl back, watching the lettering on the window. I wanted to get as near the door as possible so that I would have less space to cover if I needed to in a hurry.

I saw the big top lettering appear. I crawled further back. Then I saw the middle line with the single word STORE. I had reached only half way to the door. When I saw the line which contained the word GROCERIES, I knew that I could go no further. I knew that right below the letter G was Danny's cap. I slunk down to out-wait Danny.

Suddenly I heard a shout outside. A man was yelling, "Stop him! Stop him!" Someone ran by, his heels pounding the pavement and I heard Danny's whistle.

I raised my head. Danny was gone.

I got out quickly, found my two loaded boxes and went down the alley. I didn't do any thinking. I just walked automatically.

As I walked along the darker side of Eleventh Street, I saw a man coming towards me. I lowered my head and kept on walking. Just as we met, the round package of oatmeal fell. I couldn't reach it without putting down both boxes. I had to forget it.

The man picked up the oatmeal. "Here you are," he said. He had a pleasant voice. He was out of breath. He had a derby hat and carried a cane. I could see the wings of a collar above a white scarf.

"You've got quite a load there," he said. I could smell good liquor on his breath. It was a comfortable, rich smell.

I nodded and began to edge away.

"Whew," he said. "That was a chase. Did you see it?"

"What?" I asked.

"The chase," he said. "I was walking down Twelfth Street when I saw a man make a grab at some oranges

in front of the fruit stand near the C & D Store. The policeman and I chased him. He got away."

"Well," I said.

"Can I give you a lift with that stuff?"

I said, "No, thanks."

He said, "If I hadn't been tight I wouldn't have chased after him. It gave me a kick." He smiled. "Well, it's all in a lifetime." He saluted me. "Good night."

He went away whistling and striking his cane on the sidewalk.

I went home

Joey was asleep in the chair. She woke up with a start, staring at me.

"Martin!" she said

"Look," I said.

I put the boxes down on the table. I began to laugh. I laughed and walked around the room holding my sides. Then I picked up Joey and hugged her and kissed her. She laughed some, but she kept her eyes away from me.

Then she began going through the packages as if they had just been brought in by the grocer, except that she handled them with tenderness. She kept saying, "Oh! Oh! Oh!"

We opened a can of sausages. They were the little ones, all in a neat bundle with jelly-fat sticking to them. We opened up other cans: peas, round and glistening, and asparagus in a square tin and a rich smell. I cut a loaf of bread and its crust was powdered with flour.

"Start the peas," I said. "And the sausages. How will you have your eggs, fried, boiled, poached, scrambled?"

We lit the stove and took out all of the few pots and pans we had in the cupboard.

Once, during the preparation of the meal, Joey looked at me and said, "You all right, Mart?"

"Sure," I said. "But I'm hungry."

She kept looking at me. Then she put her hand on my cheek. "Darling," she said

"All right," I said, "Let's eat."

We got Virginia awake out of a deep sleep. She blinked and looked around and when she saw the table with all the dishes and steaming things, she began to cry and threw herself back on the bed again.

"It's real," Joey said. "Come, dear, I'll wash your face."

We ate in style, using all the knives and forks and plates we could dig up, and we ate for a long time and smoked cigarettes afterwards with big cups of coffee.

I was just leaning back in my chair, loosening my belt, when I heard someone knocking at the door.

"Clear it off," I said to Joey. "Chuck it under the bed—hide everything."

I went to the door and opened it carefully. Then I saw Larry standing there in the hall. I opened the door all the way.

"Oh, it's Larry," I said. "Hello, Larry."

Larry walked in, saying "It's late, but I saw your light." He looked at me. "How's things?"

"Fine," I said.

He looked around the room. "Having late supper?" he asked.

On the table were two paper match boxes, with the C & D lettering. I walked past Larry and slipped a plate over them. I didn't know whether he saw them

or not, but when I looked at him he had turned away and was talking to Virginia. I heard him say. “You had a good supper ?”

Virginia began recounting all the things she had to eat.

“That’s fine,” Larry said.

He turned to me “Gee, Mart,” he said. “That’s fine ”

Joey was looking at Larry. “Would you like some coffee, Larry ?” she asked

He said, “Sure thing. That’s just what I want.” Then he turned to me “Did you have a good walk, Mart ?”

There was something about Larry’s tone that gave me the hint. I remembered how he had looked at me when I left him—how worried he had been. I thought he was just being goody-goody. Now I saw it all clearly. Danny standing there at the window, the shout, the chase, Danny leaving the window. And I got out of the store

“I had a fine walk, Larry,” I said. “Thanks to you.”

Larry frowned and looked very serious. He glanced at Joey, then shook his head at me. “I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about,” he said.

# The Widow from Spain

BY J. W. WALLACE

"LIKE a good many other wealthy Spaniards Carlos kept his money in a bank here in London ever since King Alfonso was chased out. It was rather fortunate, really, because he left most of it to me, strange to say."

"Why do you think it strange?"

"Well, he might quite easily have left it all to his family so that I'd be tied to them by one leg, so to speak, and they could keep an eye on me"

"Was he as jealous as all that?"

"The limit, my dear! I don't know if I ever told you—I don't suppose I did because it's not the sort of thing one wants to have shouted from the roof-tops—but he started carrying on with me while Anita, his first wife, was still alive. She was ill, poor dear, and had been laid up with consumption for months. His relatives eventually persuaded him to stop me giving his two children English lessons and to clear me out of the house. So he arranged for me to live in a large villa on the outskirts of the town. But imagine what he went and did?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"He gave orders to the *portero* and his wife to keep the padlock on the gate, if you please, and not to let me out. I was actually a prisoner, nothing more or less.



However, I was always inclined to let things slide, and when I slid into that position I preferred to remain in it rather than create a scandal by asking the British consul to come to the rescue. Besides, I was fairly comfortable in a way. The only trouble was I couldn't get enough exercise. I finally bought a bicycle and rode round the garden paths on it."

"You rode round the garden on a *bicycle*!"

"I had to do something to exercise my legs, my dear, being cooped up like a Christmas turkey for weeks on end. The only outings I had were when Carlos took me out for a drive in his car. But I could never make him come for walks with me. I think he considered walking wasn't very dignified for a man of his social standing. He was about forty-nine or fifty, you know—not fat exactly, but plump and staid, and he took himself rather seriously."

"But do you mean you couldn't persuade him to let you go out by yourself at all?"

"I tried to, naturally, but he didn't want to risk it. He was afraid I might meet some of the English residents and that they would encourage me to leave him and return to England. As a matter of fact he needn't have worried. Although I had joined the British Club to take books out of the library I scarcely knew a soul apart from one or two governesses like myself, and after what had happened they wouldn't have dared to be seen going around with me for fear of losing their jobs. And of course I never mentioned a word about all this to my father and mother. They thought I was still working there as a governess. I haven't been up to Liverpool to see them yet."

"And will you tell them then?"

"Good Heavens, no ! They would have a fit ! I shall simply tell them I was married to Carlos suddenly a short time before he was killed "

"And how did it happen ? I mean, how was he killed ?"

"Oh, in the usual way—he was shot "

"By the Government side ?"

"Yes "

"The brutes ! I suppose they went round shooting everybody who had a clean collar on "

"No, not quite as drastic as that. There was a certain amount of picking and choosing, and I believe they made a sort of list out first But in any case both sides were equally bad "

"You don't sound very resentful about it, dear If *my* husband had been shot I would be simply bursting with prejudice "

"Oh, I don't know. You see, on the whole I think he deserved it "

"*Deserved* it !"

"Yes, tit for tat sort of business."

"Why, what did he do ?"

"He behaved in a most abominable manner to someone who took refuge in our house."

"To someone you knew ?"

"No, I had never seen him before. When the Nationalists seized the town he came and asked me to let him hide in the house. I didn't like the idea at first, but I felt sorry for him, he looked so young. He couldn't have been more than eighteen or nineteen I told him he could stay in the kitchen with the maids and if anyone came we would say he was our gardener Carlos was down in the town at the time and when he came back he

wouldn't hear of it. He said it would put him in a very awkward position supposing we were found out. I said in that case we could pretend he had slipped into the house and hidden himself without our knowing it. After a good deal of grumbling he consented to this. But behind my back he rang up a friend of his at the police station. The soldiers arrived just as I was going to bed. I started to come down the stairs to see what all the commotion was about when I saw them leading the young fellow out through the hall. He glanced up at me with a reproachful look in his eyes that sort of wrung my withers and I shook my head to make him see it wasn't my fault. I think he understood, because he then glanced at my husband who was standing near the front door talking to the officer in charge. At any rate they took him away and I heard he was shot a few days later. I was furious about it. And Carlos would keep on hinting that I must have had some special reason for trying to save him and that he was possibly a 'friend' of mine. It was too ridiculous.

"However, it wasn't long before I got my own back on him. About a week later the sound of gun-fire came nearer. There were two or three air-raids that nearly frightened the life out of me and then the Government troops re-took the town. It all happened so quickly that no one had time to escape, except the soldiers who were fighting, and some of the civil authorities who knew which way the wind was blowing. My husband was terribly nervous. He was sure reprisals would be taken on account of the people whom the Nationalists had executed while they held the town. He had half a mind to escape up the hill-side at the back of the house and try to reach Nationalist territory that way. I could just

picture him walking all that distance, and in the dark ! Falling into ditches and rolling down declivities ! I told him not to be foolish. If any soldiers came along I would tell them I was a foreigner and they would leave me alone. He agreed that I was probably right and that he was as safe there as anywhere else.

“For a couple of days nothing happened. Carlos spent most of the time in the drawing-room peeping out through the lace curtains whenever he heard a lorry or a motor-car go by. Then on the third day, in the morning, the cook, who had been down to the market, came back very excited and said they were making a house-to-house search along our street. Carlos went up to my bedroom and hid in the wardrobe. I hung my longest dresses in front of him and put some folded blankets at the bottom to hide his feet. It was a perfect scream, my dear ! You could tell at a glance somebody was hidden there by the way the dresses bulged out. I had to go out in the middle of hiding him and have a quiet laugh on the landing. He must have wondered what on earth I was doing. It was rather heartless of me, I admit, but I really couldn't help myself. I always feel like laughing at the saddest moments !

“At all events, about ten minutes later a car stopped outside the house. Six or seven men carrying rifles and revolvers came up to the front door. I went down and spoke to them. I told them I was a foreigner and at that they would have gone away, but I called them back. ‘Wait a minute,’ I said. And I told them what had happened, how one of their side had taken refuge in the house and I had promised to help him, but that someone had given him away. ‘And the man who betrayed him is hiding here now,’ I said. ‘He is in the room

upstairs on the right, inside the wardrobe. You'll know what he deserves'

"I shut myself up in the dining-room while they went into my bedroom and caught him. I couldn't bear to watch them leading him away."

"But what an awful thing to do, my dear ! Your own husband !"

"I know it does sound rather dreadful, and I felt very mean about it afterwards. But I think he thoroughly deserved it, giving the other man away like that."

"And what did they do to him ?"

"To whom, darling ?"

"To Carlos ?"

"Oh, they took him up the lane at the side of the house and shot him through the head."

"Heavens ! how perfectly hideous ! You must feel as though you'd more or less murdered him."

"Don't be rude, my dear. I feel nothing of the kind. Though of course you mustn't breathe a word about this to anyone else. You know what some people are. They might think I did it for the sake of his money."

"Well, I wouldn't put it past you, my dear."

"Cat ! I'll pinch you for that."

"*Ouch !*"

## O'Hara's Luck

BY STEPHEN VINCENT BENET

THEY were strong men built the Big Road, in the early days of America, and it was the Irish did it. My grandfather, Tim O'Hara, was a young man then, and wild. He could swing a pick all day and dance all night, if there was a fiddler handy, and if there was a girl to be pleased he pleased her, for he had the tongue and the eye. Likewise, if there was a man to be stretched, he could stretch him with the one blow.

I saw him later on in years when he was thin and white-headed, but in his youth he was not so. A thin, white-headed man would have had little chance, and they driving the Road to the West. It was two-fisted men cleared the plains and bored through the mountains—they came in the thousands to do it from every county in Ireland and now the names are not known. But it's over their graves you pass, when you ride in the pullmans. And Tim O'Hara was one of them, six feet high and solid as the Rock of Cashel when he stripped to the skin.

He needed to be all of that, for it was not easy labour. 'Twas a time of great booms and expansions in the railroad line, and they drove the tracks north and south, east and west, as if the devil was driving behind. For this they must have the boys with shovel and pick—and

every immigrant ship from Ireland was crowded with bold, young men. They left famine and England's rule behind them—and it was the thought of many they'd pick up gold for the asking in the free States of America, though it's little gold that most of them ever saw. They found themselves up to their necks in the water of the canals and burnt black by the suns of the prairie—and that was a great surprise to them. They saw their sisters and their mothers go for servants that had not been servants in Ireland, and that was a strange change, too. Eh, the death and the broken hopes it takes to make a country! But those with the heart and the tongue kept the tongue and the heart.

Tim O'Hara came from Clonmelly, and he was the fool of the family and the one who listened to tales. His brother, Ignatius, went for a priest, and his brother, James, for a sailor, but they knew he could not do that. He was strong and biddable and he had the O'Hara tongue, but there came a time of famine, when the younger mouths cried for bread and there was little room in the nest. He was not entirely wishful to emigrate, and yet, when he thought of it, he was wishful. 'Tis often enough that way, with a younger son. Perhaps he was the more wishful because of Kitty Malone. 'Tis a quiet place, Clonmelly, and she'd been the light of it to him. But now the Malones had gone to the States of America—and it was well known that Kitty had a position there the like of which was not to be found in all Dublin Castle. They called her a hired girl, to be sure, but did not she eat from gold plates, like all the citizens of America, and when she stirred her tea, was not the spoon made of gold? Tim O'Hara thought of this, and of the chances and adventures that a bold

young man might find, and at last he went to the boat. There were many from Clonmelly on that boat, but he kept himself to himself and dreamed his own dreams

The more disillusion it was to him when the boat landed him in Boston, and he found Kitty Malone there, scrubbing the stairs of an American house with a pail and brush by her side. But that did not matter, after the first, for her cheeks still had the rose in them and she looked at him in the same way. 'Tis true there was an Orangeman courting her—conductor he was on the horse-cars, and Tim did not like that. But, after he'd seen her, he felt himself the equal of giants, and when the call came for strong men to work in the wilds of the West, he was one of the first to offer. They broke a sixpence between them before he left—it was an English sixpence, but that did not matter greatly to them. And Tim O'Hara was going to make his fortune, and Kitty Malone to wait for him, though her family liked the Orangeman best.

Still and all, it was cruel work in the West, as such work must be, and Tim O'Hara was young. He liked the strength and the wildness of it—he'd drink with the thirstiest and fight with the wildest—and that he knew how to do. It was all meat and drink to him—the bare tracks pushing ahead across the bare prairie and the fussy cough of the wood-burning locomotives and the cold, blind eyes of a murdered man, looking up at the prairie stars. And then there was the cholera and the malaria—and the strong man you'd worked on the grade beside, all of a sudden gripping his belly with the fear of death on his face and his shovel falling to the ground. Next day he would not be there and



they'd scratch a name from the payroll. Tim O'Hara saw it all.

He saw it all, and it changed his boyhood and hardened it. But, for all that, there were times when the black fit came upon him, as it does to the Irish, and he knew he was alone in a strange land. Well, that's a hard hour to get through, and he was young. There were times when he'd have given all the gold of the Americas for a smell of Clonmelly air or a glimpse of Clonmelly sky. Then he'd drink or dance or fight or put a black word on the foreman, just to take the aching out of his mind. It did not help him with his work and it wasted his pay, but it was stronger than he, and not even the thought of Kitty Malone could stop it. 'Tis like that, sometimes.

Well, it happened one night he was coming back from the place where they sold the potheen and perhaps he'd had a trifle more of it than was advisable. Yet he had not drunk it for that but to keep the queer thoughts from his mind. And yet, the more that he drank, the queerer were the thoughts in his head. For he kept thinking of the Luck of the O'Haras and the tales his granda had told about it in the old country—the tales about pookas and banshees and leprechauns with long white beards. "And that's a queer thing to be thinking and myself at labour with a shovel on the open prairies of America," he said to himself. "Sure, creatures like that might live and thrive in the old country—and I'd be the last to deny it—but 'tis obvious they could not live here. The first sight of Western America would scare them into conniptions. And, as for the Luck of the O'Hara's, 'tis little good I've had of it, and me not even able to rise to foreman and marry Kit

Malone They called me the fool of the family in Clonmelly and I misdoubt but they were right. Tim O'Hara, you're a worthless man, for all your strong back and arms," and it was with such black bitter thoughts as these that he went striding over the prairie And it was just then that he heard the cry in the grass

'Twas a strange little piping cry and only the half of it human But Tim O'Hara ran to it, for, in truth, he was spoiling for a fight "Now this will be a beautiful young lady," he said to himself as he ran "And I will save her from robbers and her father, the rich man, will ask me—but, wirra, 'tis not her I wish to marry, 'tis Kitty Malone Well, he'll set me up in business, out of friendship and gratitude, and then I will send for Kitty——" but, by then, he was out of breath, and by the time he had reached the place where the cry came from, he could see that it was not so. It was only a pair of young wolf-cubs, and they chasing something small and helpless and playing with it as a cat plays with a mouse. Where the wolf-cub is, the old wolves are not far, but Tim O'Hara felt as bold as a lion "Be off with you !" he cried and he threw a stick and a stone They ran away into the night, and he could hear them howling—a lonesome sound But he knew the camp was near, so he paid small attention to that but looked for the thing they'd been chasing

It scuttled in the grass, but he could not see it. Then he stooped down and picked something up, and when he had it in his hand, he stared at it unbelieving For it was a tiny shoe, no bigger than a child's And, more than that, it was not the kind of shoe that is made in America. Tim O'Hara stared and stared at it—and at the silver buckle upon it—and still he could not believe

"If I'd found this in the old country," he said to himself, half-aloud, "I'd have sworn that it was a leprechaun's and looked for the pot of gold. But here, there's no chance of that——"

"I'll trouble you for the shoe," said a small voice by his feet

TIM O'Hara stared round him wildly "By the piper that played before Moses!" he said, "am I drunk beyond comprehension? Or am I mad? For I thought that I heard a voice"

"So you did, silly man," said the voice again, but irritated "And I'll trouble you for my shoe, for it's cold in the dewy grass"

"Honey!" said TIM O'Hara, beginning to believe his ears "Honey dear, if you'll but show yourself——"

"I'll do that and gladly," said the voice, and with that, the grasses parted, and a little old man with a long white beard stepped out. He was perhaps the size of a well-grown child, as O'Hara could see clearly by the moonlight on the prairie; moreover, he was dressed in the clothes of antiquity, and he carried cobbler's tools in the belt as his side

"By faith and belief, but it *is* a leprechaun!" cried O'Hara, and with that he made a grab for the apparition. For you must know, in case you've been ill brought up, that a leprechaun is a sort of cobbler-fairy, and each one knows the whereabouts of a pot of gold. Or it's so they say in the old country. For they say you can tell a leprechaun by his long white beard and his cobbler's tools, and once you have the possession of him, he must tell you where his gold is hid.

The little old man skipped out of reach, as nimbly as a cricket. "And is this Clonmelly courtesy?"

he said, with a shake in his voice, and Tim O'Hara felt ashamed.

"Sure, I didn't mean to hurt your worship at all," he said. "But, if you're what you seem to be, well, then, there's the little matter of a pot of gold——"

"Pot of gold !" said the leprechaun, and his voice was hollow. "And would I be here to-day if I had that same ? Sure, it all went to pay my passage, as you might reasonably expect "

"Well," said Tim O'Hara, scratching his head, for that sounded reasonable enough. "That may be so or again it may not be so. But——"

"Oh, 'tis bitter hard !" said the leprechaun, and his voice was weeping, "to come to the waste, wild prairies all alone, just for the love of Clonmelly folk—and then to be disbelieved by the first that speaks to me ! If it had been an Ulsterman now, I might have expected it. But the O'Hara's wear the green "

"So they do," said Tim O'Hara. "And it shall not be said of an O'Hara that he denied succour to the friendless. Sit quiet, little man—I'll not touch you," he said.

"Do you swear it ?" said the leprechaun.

"I swear it," said Tim O'Hara.

"Then I'll just creep under your coat," said the leprechaun. "For I'm near destroyed by the chills and damps of the prairie. Oh, this weary emigrating !" he said, with a sigh like a furnace. "'Tis not what it's cracked up to be "

Tim O'Hara took off his own coat and wrapped it around him. Then he could see him closer—and it could not be denied that the leprechaun was a pathetic sight. He'd a queer, little boyish face, under the long,

white beard, but his clothes were all torn and ragged and his cheeks looked hollow with hunger.

"Cheer up !" said Tim O'Hara, and patted him on the back "It's a bad day that beats the Irish. But tell me first how you came here—for that still sticks in my throat "

"And would I be staying behind with half Clonmelly on the water ?" said the leprechaun stoutly. "By the bones of Finn, what sort of a man do you think I am ?"

"Well, that's well said," said Tim O'Hara. "And yet I never heard of the Good People emigrating before "

"True for you," said the leprechaun "The climate here's not good for most of us, and that's a fact There's a boggart or so that came over with the English, but then the Puritan ministers got after them and they had to take to the woods And I had a word or two, on my way West, with a banshee that lives by Lake Superior—a decent woman she was, but you could see she'd come down in the world For even the bits of children wouldn't believe in her, and, when she let out a screech, sure they thought it was a steamboat. I misdoubt she's died since then—she was not in good health when I left her And as for the native spirits—well, you can say what you like but they're not very comfortable people. I was captive to some of them a week and they treated me well enough, but they whooped and danced too much for a quiet man, and I did not like the long, sharp knives on them. Oh, I've had the adventures !" he said "But they're over now, praises be, for I've found a protector at last," and he snuggled closer under O'Hara's coat.

"Well," said O'Hara, somewhat taken aback, "I did not think this would be the way of it, when I found

O'Hara's Luck that I'd dreamed of so long. For, first I save your life from the wolves, and now, it seems, I must be protecting you further. But in the tales it's always the other way round "

"And is the company and conversation of an ancient and experienced creature like myself nothing to you ?" said the leprechaun fiercely. "Me that had my own castle at Clonmelly and saw O'Sheen in his pride ? Then St Patrick came—wirra, wirra !—and there was an end to it all. For some of us—the Old Folk of Ireland—he baptized, and some of us he chained with the demons of hell But I was Lazy Brian, betwixt and between, and all I wanted was peace and a quiet life So he changed me to what you see—me that had six, tall harpers to harp me awake in the morning—and laid a doom upon me for being betwixt and between I'm to serve Clonmelly folk and follow them wherever they go till I serve the servants of servants in a land at the world's end. And then, perhaps, I'll be given a Christian soul and can follow my own inclinations "

"Serve the servants of servants ?" said O'Hara "Well, that's a hard riddle to read."

"It is that," said the leprechaun "For I never once met the servant of a servant in Clonmelly, all the time I've been looking. I doubt but that was in St. Patrick's mind "

"If it's criticizing the good saint you are, I'll leave you here on the prairie," said Tim O'Hara.

"I'm not criticizing him," said the leprechaun, with a sigh, "but I could wish he'd been less hasty Or more specific And now, what do we do ?" he said, and looked up in O'Hara's face like a child.

"Well," said O'Hara, and he sighed, too. "'Tis a

great responsibility, and one I never thought to shoulder. But, since you've asked for help, you must have it. Only there's just this to be said. There's a little money in my pocket and I'm a labouring man."

"Sure, 'tis not for your money I've come to you," said the leprechaun, joyously; "and I'll stick closer than a brother"

"I've no doubt of that," said O'Hara, with a wry laugh. "Well, clothes and food I can get for you—but if you stick with me, you must work as well. And perhaps the best way would be for you to be my young nephew, Rory, run away from home to work on the railroad"

"And how would I be your young nephew, Rory, and me with a long white beard?"

"Well," said Tim O'Hara, with a grin, "as it happens I've got a razor in my pocket," and, with that you should have heard the leprechaun. He stamped and he swore and he pled—but it was no use at all. If he was to follow Tim O'Hara, he must do it on Tim O'Hara's terms and no two ways about it. So O'Hara shaved him at last, by the light of the moon, to the leprechaun's great horror, and when he got him back to the construction camp and fitted him out in some old duds of his own—well, it wasn't exactly a boy he looked, but it was more like a boy than anything else. You couldn't quite tell the age of him, to be sure, and there was something about him that made you feel uncomfortable—but he'd pass for a queer kind of boy, for his hair was darker than his beard. Tim took him up to the foreman the next day and got him signed on for a water-boy, and it was a beautiful tale he told the foreman. As well, too, that he had the O'Hara tongue to tell it with, for when

the foreman first looked at young Rory, you could see him gulp like a man that's seen a ghost.

"And now what do we do?" said the leprechaun to Tim, when the interview was over.

"Why, you work," said Tim with a great laugh. "And Sundays you wash your shirt."

"Thank you for nothing," said the leprechaun, with an angry gleam in his eye. "It was not for that I came here"

"Oh, we've all come here for great fortune," said O'Hara. "But it's hard to find that same. Would you rather be with the wolves?"

"Oh no," said the leprechaun.

"Then drill, ye tarrier, drill!" said Tim O'Hara, and shouldered his shovel, while the leprechaun trailed behind.

At the end of the day, the leprechaun came to him

"I've never done mortal work before," he said, "and there's no bone in my body that's not a pain and an anguish to me."

"You'll feel better after supper," said O'Hara, "and the night's made for sleep"

"But where will I sleep?" said the leprechaun.

"In the half of my blanket," said Tim. "For are you not young Rory, my nephew?"

It was not what he could have wished, but he saw he could do no otherwise. Once you start a tale, you must play up to the tale.

But that was only the beginning, as Tim O'Hara soon found out. For Tim O'Hara had tasted many things before—but not responsibility—and now responsibility was like a bit in his mouth. It was not so bad the first



week, while the leprechaun was still ailing. But when, what with the food and the exercise, he began to recover his strength, 'twas a wonder Tim O'Hara's hair did not turn grey overnight. He was not a bad creature, the leprechaun, but he had all the natural mischief of a boy of twelve and, added to that, the craft and knowledge of generations. "Tim O'Hara's young divil" they called him around the camp—and there wasn't a free breath Tim drew, except in his sleep at night. There was the three pipes he took away from young Rory—and the dead frog he slipped in the foreman's tea—and the bottle of potheen he got hold of one night when Tim had to hold his head in a bucket of water to sober him up. A fortunate thing it was that St. Patrick had left him no great powers—but at that he had enough to put the jumping rheumatism on Shaun Kelly for two days—and it wasn't till Tim threatened to deny him the use of his razor entirely that he took off the spell. That brought Rory to terms, for by now he'd come to take a queer pleasure in playing the part of a boy and he did not wish to have it altered. Every morning, before the camp was awake, he'd shave himself clean, and Tim could never get over the queerness and solemnity of the sight.

Well, things went on like this for some time, and Tim O'Hara's savings grew, for, whenever the drink was running, he took no part in it, for fear of mislaying his wits when it came to deal with young Rory. And, as it was with the drink, so was it with other things—till Tim O'Hara began to be known as a steady man. And then, as it happened, one morning, Tim O'Hara woke up early. The leprechaun had finished his shaving and was sitting cross-legged, chuckling to himself.

"And what's your source of amusement so early in the day?" said Tim.

"Oh," said the leprechaun, "I'm just thinking of the rare hard work we'll have when the line's ten miles farther on,"

"And why should it be harder there than it is here?" said Tim.

"Oh, nothing," said the leprechaun. "But those fools of surveyors have laid out the line where there's hidden springs of water. And when we start digging there'll be the devil to pay."

"Do you know that for a fact?" said Tim.

"And why wouldn't I know it?" said the leprechaun. "Me, that can hear the waters run underground."

"Then what should we do?" said Tim.

"Shift the line half a mile to the west and you'd have a firm roadbed," said the leprechaun. "But they're too big fools to do that!" and he rocked with laughter.

Tim O'Hara said no more at the time. But, for all that, he managed to get to the assistant-engineer in charge of construction at the noon hour. He could not have done it before, but now he was known as a steady man. Nor did he tell where he got the information—he put on having seen a similar thing in the old country.

Well, the engineer listened to him and had a test made—sure enough, they struck the hidden springs. "That's clever work, O'Hara," said the engineer. "You've saved us time and money. And now how would you like to be foreman of a gang?"

"I'd like it well," said Tim O'Hara.

"Then you boss gang Five from this day forward," said the engineer. "And I'll keep my eye on you. For

when you first came to the work you seemed just another wild Irishman. But I like a man that uses his head."

"Can my nephew come with me," said Tim. "For, 'troth, he's my responsibility."

"He can," said the engineer, who had children of his own, "and I think no less of you for it"

So Tim got promoted and the leprechaun along with him. And the first day on the new work, young Rory stole the gold watch from the engineer's pocket, because he liked the tick of it, and Tim had to threaten him with fire and sword before he'd put it back.

Well things went on like this for another while, till finally Tim woke up early on another morning and heard the leprechaun laughing. This time he didn't bother to rub the sleep from his eyes but asked him the question point-blank.

"And what are you laughing at?" he said.

"Oh, the more I see of mortal work, the less reason there is to it," said the leprechaun. "For I've been watching the way they get the rails up to us on the lines. And they do it thus and so. But if they did it so and thus, they could do it in half the time with half the work."

"Is that so indeed?" said Tim O'Hara and he made him explain it clearly. Then, after he'd swallowed his breakfast, he was off to his friend the engineer.

"That's a clever idea, O'Hara," said the engineer. "We'll try it." And a week after that Tim O'Hara found himself with a hundred men under him and more responsibility than he'd ever had in his life. But it seemed little to him beside the responsibility of the leprechaun, and now the engineer began to lend him books to study and him to study them at nights while the leprechaun snored in its blanket. A man could rise

rapidly in those days—and it was then Tim O'Hara got the start that was to carry him far. But he did not know he was getting it, for his heart was near broken at the time over Kitty Malone. She'd written him a letter or two when he first came West, but now there were no more of them, and at last he got a letter from her family telling him he should not be disturbing Kitty with letters from a labouring man. That was bitter for Tim O'Hara and he'd think about Kitty and the Orangeman in the watches of the night and groan. And then, one morning, he woke up after such a night and heard the leprechaun laughing.

"And what are you laughing at now?" he said, sourly, "for my heart's near burst with its pain."

"I'm laughing at a man that would let a cold letter keep him from his love and him with pay in his pocket and the contract ending the first," said the leprechaun.

Tim O'Hara struck one hand in the palm of the other.

"By the piper, but you've the right of it, you queer little creature!" he said. "'Tis back to Boston we go, when this job's over."

It was labourer Tim O'Hara that had come to the West, but it was Railroadman Tim O'Hara that rode back East in the cars like a gentleman, with a free pass in his pocket and the promise of a job on the railward that was fitting a married man. The leprechaun, I may say, save some trouble in the cars, more particularly when he bit a fat woman that called him a dear little boy, but what with giving him peanuts all the way, Tim O'Hara managed to keep him fairly quieted.

When they got to Boston, he fitted them both out in new clothes from top to toe. Then he gave the leprechaun some money and told him to amuse

himself for an hour or so, while he went to see Kitty Malone

He walked into the Malone's flat as bold as brass, and there sure enough, in the front-room, were Kitty Malone and the Orangeman. He was trying to squeeze her hand, and she refusing, and it made Tim O'Hara's blood boil to see that. But when Kitty saw Tim O'Hara she let out a scream.

"Oh, Tim!" she said. "Tim! And they told me you were dead in the plains of the West!"

"And a great pity that he was not," said the Orangeman, blowing out his chest with the brass buttons on it. "But a bad penny always turns up."

"Bad penny is it, you brass-buttoned son of iniquity," said Tim O'Hara, "I have but the one question to put you. Will you stand or will you run?"

"I'll stand as we stood at Boyne Water," said the Orangeman, grinning ugly. "And whose backs did we see that day?"

"Oh, is that the tune?" said Tim O'Hara. "Well, I'll give you a tune to match it. Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?"

With that, he was through the Orangeman's guard and stretched him at the one blow, to the great consternation of the Malones. The old woman started to screech and Pat Malone to talk of policeman, but Tim O'Hara silenced the both of them.

"Would you give your daughter to an Orangeman that works on the horse-cars when she might be marrying a future railroad-president?" he said, and with that he pulled his savings out of his pocket and the letter that promised the job for a married man. That quieted the Malones a little, and, once they got a good look at

Tim O'Hara, they began to change their tune. For he had a derby hat in his hand, not to speak of the blue-serge suit and the stickpin in his tie, and 'twas plain to be seen that he was a prospering man. So, after they'd got the Orangeman out of the house—and he did not go willing, but he went as a whipped man must—Tim O'Hara recounted all of his adventures.

The tale did not lose in the telling, though he did not speak of the leprechaun, for he thought that had better be left to a later day, and at the end, Pat Malone was offering him a cigar. "But I find I have none upon me," said he with a wink at Tim, "so I'll just run down to the corner."

"And I'll go with you," said Kitty's mother. "For if Mr. O'Hara stays to supper—and he's welcome—there's a bit of shopping to be done."

So the old folks left Tim O'Hara and his Kitty alone, and if they didn't have more than the Presidential election to talk about I'd be greatly surprised. But just as they were in the middle of their planning and contriving for the future, there came a knock on the door.

"What's that?" said Kitty, but Tim O'Hara knew well enough, and his heart sank within him. He opened the door—and sure enough, it was the leprechaun.

"Well, Uncle Tim," said the creature, grinning, "I'm here."

Tim O'Hara took a look at him as if he saw him for the first time. He was dressed in new clothes, to be sure, but there was a smooch of soot on his face and his collar had thumbmarks on it already. But that wasn't what made the difference. New clothes or old, if you looked at him for the first time, you could see he was an

unchancy thing, and not like Christian souls. He'd be hard to explain to Kitty, and Tim O'Hara knew it, but he gulped and went ahead

"Kitty," he said, "Kitty, darlint, I had not told you. But this is my young nephew Rory that lives with me "

Well, Kitty welcomed the boy with her prettiest manners, though Tim O'Hara could see her giving him a side-look now and then. All the same, she gave him a slice of cake, and he tore it apart with his fingers, but in the middle of it he pointed to Kitty Malone

"Have you made up your mind to marry my uncle Tim ?" he said. "Faith, you'd better, for he's a grand catch."

"Hold your tongue, young Rory," said Tim O'Hara angrily, and Kitty blushed red. But then she took the next words out of his mouth.

"Let the gossoon be, Tim O'Hara," she said bravely. "Why shouldn't he speak his mind, Yes, Roryeen—it's I that will be your aunt in the days to come—and a proud woman, too "

"Well, that's good," said the leprechaun, cramming the last of the cake in his mouth, "for I'm thinking you'll make a good home for us, once you're used to my way."

"Is that to be the way of it, Tim ?" said Kitty Malone, very quietly, but Tim O'Hara looked at her and knew what was in her mind. And he had the greatest impulse in the world to deny the leprechaun and send him about his own business. And yet, when he thought of it, he knew that he could not do it, not even if it meant the losing of Kitty Malone. For he owed the thing kinship and gratitude—and he was not a man to leave debts unpaid, even at the cost of the dearest thing in the world to him.

"I'm afraid that must be the way of it, Kitty," he said, with a groan, "For young Rory had none but me, and I'm responsible for him."

"Then I honour you for it," said Kitty, with her eyes like stars. She went up to the leprechaun and took his hard little hand. "Will you live with us, young Rory?" she said. "For we'd be glad to have you."

"Thank you kindly, Kitty Malone—O'Hara to be," said the leprechaun. "And you're lucky, Tim O'Hara—lucky yourself and lucky in your wife. For, if you had denied me then, your luck would have left you—and if she had denied me then, 'twould be but half-luck for you both. But now the luck will stick to you the rest of your lives. And I'm wanting another piece of cake," said he.

"Well, it's the queer lad you are," said Kitty Malone, but she went for the cake. The leprechaun swung his legs and looked at Tim O'Hara. "I wonder what keeps my hands off you," said the latter with a groan.

"Fie!" said the leprechaun, grinning. "And would you be lifting the hand to your one nephew? But tell me one thing, Tim O'Hara. Was this wife you're to take ever in domestic service?"

"And what if she was?" said Tim O'Hara, firing up. "Who thinks the worse of her for that?"

"Not I," said the leprechaun, "for I've learned about mortal labour since I came to this country—and it's an honest thing. But tell me one thing more. Do you mean to serve this wife of yours and honour her, through the days of your wedded life?"

"Such is my intention," said Tim, "though what business it is of——"



"Never mind," said the leprechaun. "Your shoelace is undone, bold man. Command me to tie it up."

"Tie up my shoe, you black-hearted, villainous little anatomy!" thundered Tim O'Hara, and the leprechaun did so. Then he jumped to his feet and skipped about the room.

"Free! Free!" he piped. "Free at last! For I've served the servants of servants and the doom has no power on me longer. Free, Tim O'Hara! O'Hara's luck is free!"

Tim O'Hara stared at him, dumb, and even as he stared, the creature seemed to change. He was small, to be sure, and boyish—but you could see the unchancy look leave him and the Christian soul come into his eyes. That was a queer thing to be seen, and a great one, too.

"Well," said Tim O'Hara, in a sober voice, "I'm glad for you, Rory. For now you'll be going back to Clonmelly, no doubt—and faith, you've earned the right."

The leprechaun shook his head.

"Clonmelly's a fine, quiet place," said he. "But this country's bolder. I misdoubt it's something in the air—you will not have noticed it, but I've grown two inches and a half since first I met you, and I feel myself growing still. No, it's off to the mines of the West I am, to follow my natural vocation—for they say there are mines out there you could mislay all Dublin Castle in—and wouldn't I like to try! But, speaking of that, Tim O'Hara," he said, "I was not quite honest with you about the pot of gold. You'll find your share behind the door when I've gone. And now good-day and long life to you!"

"But, man dear !" said Tim O'Hara, 'tis not good-bye !" For it was then he realized the affection that was in him for the queer little creature

"No, 'tis not good-bye," said the leprechaun. "When you christen your first son, I'll be at his cradle, though you will not see me—and so with your sons' sons and their sons, for O'Hara's luck's just begun. But we'll part for the present, now. For, now I'm a Christian soul, I've work to do in the world "

"Wait a minute," said Tim O'Hara. "For you would not know, no doubt, and you such a new soul. And no doubt you'll be secing the priest—but a layman can do it in emergency, and I think this is one. I dare not have you leave me—and you not even baptized."

And with that, he made the sign of the cross and baptized the leprechaun. He named him Rory Patrick.

"Tis not done with all the formalities," he said at the end. "But I'll defend the intention."

"I'm grateful to you," said the leprechaun. "And, if there was a debt to be paid, you've paid it back and more."

And with that, he was gone somehow, and Tim O'Hara was alone in the room. He rubbed his eyes. But there was a little sack behind the door, where the leprechaun had left it—and Kitty was coming in with a slice of cake on a plate

"Well, Tim," she said, "and where's that young nephew of yours ?"

So he took her into his arms and told her the whole story. And how much of it she believed, I do not know. But there's one remarkable circumstance. Ever since then, there's always been one Rory O'Hara in the family, and that one luckier than the lave. And when

Tim O'Hara got to be a railroad president, why, didn't he call his private car, "The Leprechaun"? For that matter, they said, when he took his business trips, there'd be a small, boyish-looking fellow with him now and again. He'd turn up from nowhere, at some odd stop or other, and he'd be let in at once, while the great of the railroad-world were kept waiting in the vestibule. And, after a while, there'd be singing from inside the car.



**THE ROADMAKERS**

*From an etching by Raymond Watkinson*

# Our Fred

BY LESLIE HALWARD

YOU'D never take us for brothers, our Fred and me. We're as different as chalk and cheese. There's nothing about us that's the same. Not a thing. Take looks for a start. I'm short and thick-set and he's over six foot and about as far through as a wireless pole. I'm as dark as they make 'em and he's got silky, wavy fair hair and a skin like a girl's—only shaves himself once a week, he does, and when he's done it you can't see the difference. I take after the old man, I suppose—not that that's anything to write home about—but anyhow they say I'm the dead spit of him when he was my age. God knows who our Fred takes after. Nobody in *our* family on either side, that's a certain fact. One on his own, he is—a throw-out, the old man used to say he was.

Yes, he's one on his own all right, our Fred is. It's funny how you sometimes get one in a family who looks and acts as if he don't belong. It does happen like that once in a while. As if the kid had been left at the wrong address. That's what I used to think about our Fred. There'd been a mistake somewhere. He never ought to have come to our house at all. Somebody had stuck the wrong label on him. Sounds a bit daft, I know, but that's how it used to strike me.

He was out of place altogether, our Fred was. We knew it and he knew it, even when he was a little kid.

And you could tell it worried him. You could tell he wished he could be the same as us others. But he couldn't. He tried, but he just couldn't.

And as he got older it worried him more. You could see that. He knew he was different to us and he didn't want to be different. He was a bit touchy, I suppose, and he sort of felt out of things. And yet he couldn't join in, if you see what I mean. It wasn't his nature. You can't do what it isn't your nature to do. Nobody can't. Not for long, anyway. You can't keep it up. You might do it for a bit, but it goes against the grain, and before very long you find yourself dropping into the old style again.

Well, our Fred, when he felt he was kind of out of his element, he just went into his shell. I honestly never met a quieter chap than our Fred. And that's another way we're different. I like a bit of life, I do, a bit of fun. And I have it. You can't keep *me* out of the picture. I like to be seen *and* heard. I can't help it, no more than our Fred can help being quiet.

Quiet? He'd go for hours and never utter a word to anybody. Never a word. When he was a nipper the old lady used to get worried about him, think he was off colour or something. But he was all right. He was never very *strong*, mind you, but because he was quiet it didn't mean that he felt any worse than usual. He was quiet because he wanted to be quiet, that was all. And in time we got used to it. We got used to him sitting in the house, reading as a rule, and never making a sound. It got on my nerves a bit, though, sometimes, and many's the night I've sloped off to the pictures sooner than sit looking at him stuck on top of the fire with a book on his knees, never moving, never speaking,

as if he was made of stone. It must have got on the old lady's nerves a bit and all. I've seen her give him a clout with the oven door, swing it back on purpose and give him a crack on the knee just to try and make him shift. Even then he wouldn't say anything. He'd just look at her. And she'd say, 'Sorry' as if it was an accident and she really was sorry if she'd hurt him. He'd got a way of looking at you, our Fred had, that made you feel about as tall as a bob's worth of coppers.

He was a clever kid at school, our Fred was. Odds to me. I'm older than him by nearly three years, but he'd got me licked any day. By the time he was eight he was in the same standard as me, and it wasn't long before he went on in front. He got into the secondary school when he was ten and stopped there till he was fifteen. Then he went to work in a solicitor's office. He's still at the same place, and a damn good job he's got there, I should think. Of course, as far as our Fred's concerned you can think what you like. But you can never be certain. He never tells you anything. Still, I shouldn't think I'm so very far out in saying that his job's worth about twice as much a week as mine is. I don't know how much longer he'll keep it, though. Not long, the way he's going on. But I'm over-running my tale.

As I was saying. I never met a quieter chap than our Fred. Even after he'd started work, when a chap usually opens out a bit, begins to feel his feet, he never altered. Not in the right direction, at any rate. I think he got quieter if anything. He hadn't got any pals, never went out anywhere, and if we had any company he'd tuck himself up in a corner and sit there with as much to say for himself as a tailor's dummy. As likely as not he'd have his nose stuck into a book, wouldn't know

there was anybody in the house besides himself. The old lady would have to tell him three or four times to get to the table, and then he wouldn't eat enough to satisfy a gnat.

Another thing about our Fred—you could never tell what he was thinking. I mean, if you said or did anything to upset him, you'd know all right that you'd said or done *something* he didn't like because he'd sulk for hours, days sometimes. But you'd never know what it was. He'd keep it to himself. If you asked him outright what was up with him he'd say, "Nothing," and that's as far as you'd get. We got into the way of just leaving him alone to get over it, whatever it was, which, of course, in time he did.

Well, that gives you a pretty good idea of the sort of chap our Fred is, and you might know how flabbergasted we all was when one Saturday afternoon—just over a couple of years ago it would be now—he asked the old lady, as casual as you like, if he could bring his girl in. His *girl*, mind you. Our Fred with a girl! Nobody spoke for about a minute. We just looked at each other. Then our Fred said, a bit sharp, "Well, have you got any objection?" and the old lady said, "No, I haven't got any objection," and he said, "All right, then, I'll bring her in to tea to-morrow." And with that he went out, with never a word about who the girl was or where he'd met her—we've never found that out to this day—or where she lived or worked or damn all else. Talk about dropping a bombshell.

Sunday afternoon I'd got a date of my own and it was a good bit after five o'clock when I got back. The old lady was in the scullery, making the tea, when I opened the door. All the others was in the living room. They'd



been waiting for me, I suppose. The old lady said something about me being late, then bustled off with the teapot, and I followed her.

When I saw the girl who was sitting next to our Fred on the sofa you could have knocked me down with a feather, as the saying is. I honestly don't think I ever had such a shock in my life. I must have stood gaping at her for about ten seconds before I could pull myself together and shake hands with her and say, "How'd you do," as if I'd never set eyes on her before. Seeing *me* must have been a bit of a jolt for *her*, but I must say she took it well, and never as much as batted an eyelid.

Well, nobody seemed to have took any notice of the way I acted, and we all got settled round the table. I don't know how I got through that meal. I didn't eat hardly a thing. I couldn't eat. I was very nearly choking. When I'd got over the first shock I was that mad at the way things had turned out that I could have kicked the table over. Of all the rotten things that could have happened this was about the rottenest. There was our Fred, as quiet and decent a chap as you'd find anywhere, never been near enough to a girl to know she was made any different to him, there was he had to go and get hooked by a—a—well, she was no lady, anyhow. Didn't I know? Why, I'd been with her myself, more than once. And so had plenty of other fellows I knew. A year or two back everybody knew she was good for a bit of sport. Her family had gone to live on the other side of the town and I hadn't seen or heard of her for about eighteen months. But I knew her all right and she knew me. I could have cried. Surely to God, I thought, she'll never have the nerve to put her face inside *this* house again.

As soon as the meal was over, I got up and went into the front room, just to be by myself for a bit. I wanted to think. But I couldn't think. All I could do was fume and rave to myself and curse the luck that had brought *them* two together. And I hadn't been in there more than a few minutes when in *she* walked. She'd got a pluck, I thought.

I didn't beat about the bush. As soon as she'd shut the door I said, "Look here, you leave our Fred alone!"

"I know what you're thinking," she said. "And I've come to tell *you* something. Fred and me love each other. I've finished with the old game. Fred don't know anything about that, and I don't see any reason why he should."

And I said, "Don't you? Well, I do!"

And she said, "You mean you're going to tell him?"

And I said, "The first opportunity I get!"

She coloured up like a beetroot, and just as that moment our Fred opened the door and walked in. He must have seen the colour on her face and come to his own conclusions about it. At any rate, if looks could kill I should have dropped dead on the spot. None of us spoke, and I went out and left them to it. I went straight through on to the back yard and lit a cigarette.

It wasn't many seconds before our Fred was with me. He was as white as a sheet, and when he spoke his voice trembled as if somebody was shaking him.

"Look here," he said, "I've never quarrelled with you yet and I don't want to start."

And I said, "What d'you mean by that, Fred?"

And he said, "You know what I mean." He licked his lips. "If you as much as look at Marjorie I—I'll smash your face in!"

I very nearly laughed. I mean, I don't want to brag, but I could knock the stuffing out of him with one hand tied behind my back. But I just said, "All right, Fred," and with that he marched off into the house again.

Well, that was that. He'd got it bad all right. It was only to be expected, I suppose. I mean, he'd never as much as looked at a girl before, so it was only natural that when he fell for one he'd fall good and properly. And I'd got sense enough to see that, with him feeling as he did, it would only make things a darned sight worse if I told him what I knew about this girl. You can imagine how I felt about it all, but there was nothing I could do except wait for a better chance, and in the meantime watch which way the wind blew.

It was easy enough to see which way the wind was blowing. Our Fred went courting very nearly every night of the week, sometimes bringing Marjorie back with him for a bit of supper and as regular as clock-work to tea every other Sunday. And talk about a couple of love birds! They was all over each other. It was, "Dear" this and, "Dear" that and, "Dear" the other and—well, proper sloppy I reckon they was. But mind you, it looked genuine enough. At first I didn't know what to think. First I'd make up my mind that I'd better put my spoke in, and risk the consequences, before it had gone too far. Then I'd decide to wait. And as time went on I began to think that perhaps Marjorie *had* turned over a new leaf and was going to behave herself, after all. It was as plain as the nose on your face that our Fred thought the world of her, and to all appearances she thought as much of him. If it *had* developed into a proper affair it seemed a pity to go and bust it up. The girl certainly had altered and the

old people seemed to like her all right. But somehow I couldn't feel sure. I couldn't forget what she used to be like.

Anyhow, I held my tongue, and after that Sunday night when Marjorie first came to the house our Fred and me never had another cross word. We'd always got on well together, really, although we was so different. I suppose at bottom I've always felt a bit sorry for him. When we was kids I always used to take his part. He's a queer chap, I know, but I've always liked our Fred. And I'm not going to have anybody saying anything against him. As usual, it's them that have got the least room to talk that are opening their mouths the widest. It always was like that.

Well, about a year ago Fred and Marjorie got married. They did it very nice and quietly at the register office, had a week at Bournemouth, and then went and settled down in the home they'd got on the new estate about a mile from our place. I got into the habit of dropping in once a week—it's only a penny ride on the bus—and there's no mistake about it they'd got it very snug. Marjorie kept the place as clean as a new pin, and it was easy to see that they was about as happy as any couple could be. The more I saw of them the more glad I was that I'd kept my mouth shut and let things take their course. Our Fred looked better and was livelier than I'd ever seen him before in his life.

Then one night when I was there, about a couple of months ago it would be, they had a row. It started over nothing. I could see our Fred was a bit funny, in one of his moods, as soon as I got in, but I didn't take a lot of notice. Then, after he'd sat without speaking for best part of an hour, Marjorie said something to him and he

snapped her nose off. In a second they was at it hammer and tongues. I'd never seen our Fred in a real temper before, and I just sat there with my mouth open, looking at them. When they'd cooled down a bit, I shoved off.

I didn't think much about it. Pretty well all couples have a stack-up now and again, I suppose, and in any case it was none of my business. For some reason or other I didn't go again for about a fortnight, and by then I'd forgotten all about what happened the last time I was there. It was a bit of a shock to see that they'd been at it again. Marjorie had been crying and our Fred never even spoke to me when I went in. It wasn't many minutes before I went out again. I was never one to park myself where I can see I'm not wanted.

Since then I've only been there once. A pal of mine told me that our Fred was stuck in the pub on the corner till turning-out time very nearly every night of the week. I went to see Marjorie. She started to cry after I'd been there a bit. She couldn't understand what had come over our Fred, she said. Nothing she did was right and she could hardly look or speak for him these days. I didn't ask her where he was, there was no need to do that, nor how she got that bruise on her cheek. The poor kid was upset enough.

Well, there it is. *She* don't know what's come over our Fred, but to me it's as plain as pike-staff. Somebody or other's told him what I very nearly told him myself. That's what's happened all right. He's found out that Marjorie isn't what he thought she was. He hasn't told *her* what he's found out, and from what I know about *him*, it might be months before he does. It'll come out some time, of course, when he can't keep it

bottled up any longer, for it's no little thing that he's going to forget. But what's going to happen before then? The neighbours are talking enough now. God knows where he'll finish up, the way he's carrying on.

Mind you, I'm not blaming him. I blame myself for not putting him wise in the first place. I could have saved him all this. I was a fool. Worse than that. And when he does explode and a few truths come out, Marjorie will be sure to let it slip that I——

What do you suppose might happen then?

# Poulou, Wife of Maluque

BY LÉON LAFAGE

(Translated by RALPH COOKE)

No one could build fires like old Maluque's. First, against the blackened iron back of the fireplace he rolled a mossy knotted oak log with the bark on it, slow burning and whimpering, then some pieces of beech split with the axe and faggots of leaves and twigs. The whole thing was cemented together with coals and cinders. Winter was free then, for all he cared, to freeze the moon in the pond or to whistle through the holes in the cracks: feet to the fire-dogs, with a bottle of muscatel and a handful of almonds, old Maluque entertained his friends.

His wife, Poulou the shrew, grumbled at the expense, and when nine o'clock came, filled the copper warming-pan with hot cinders. She meant this as a hint to the visitors, but old Maluque, drawing at his pipe, winked at them to stay. Then:

"Poulou," he ordered, "another bottle and an armful of faggots!"

The old woman muttered ferociously. But the flames grew higher in the fire-basket and the wine lower in the bottle.

"You certainly know how to keep warm, Maluque," agreed the neighbours.

"If he knows how to keep warm you know how to drink!" hissed Poulou between her four teeth.

"The wife's telling her beads," remarked the old man  
"Amen !"

"A bad business, a nagging wife," said Récavillières, the road-mender. "I advise Maluque to pick a gentle one next time."

Poulou, at this, stopped short, outraged. She could not bear them to talk of anyone taking her place. For the few moments that the joke lasted she came and shook her fist under Maluque's pipe.

"Next time, eh, old man ! Are you listening to these villains ?"

Maluque, philosophical, did not even draw an extra puff of smoke. Cherrywood pipes need smoking slowly ; besides, he was used to this scene. He looked at Poulou with the sharp little pointed eyes in his heavy face that were like the muzzles of mice at the openings of two mouseholes.

"I'll come back and pull you out of bed by the feet, do you hear ?" she threatened. "By the feet !"

"Don't you worry, Poulou," said one of the visitors. "When you've gone I don't suppose you'll come back any more than anybody else."

"I won't come back !" stormed the old woman. "You don't know who I am !"

Then Maluque, in spite of his pipe and the wine, two certainties in life, felt uneasy about the future. It crossed his mind that if ever anything unfortunate happened, Poulou, dead, would trouble him more than Poulou alive.

He was not wrong.

That old terror Poulou was the first to go. They gave her a very modest funeral. The carpenter made a wooden cross which he painted black ; it could be seen



drying against the shutters of his workshop. On it, in white letters, was written

Here Lies  
POULOU, WIFE OF MALUQUE  
*Requiescat In Pace !*

“What does that Latin mean ?” asked Maluque.

“May she rest in peace,” translated the carpenter.

“We’ve need of it,” said the old man.

And he went off himself to plant the cross deeply in the cemetery. Then, with his face covered in sweat, he put on his spectacles and spelt out, slowly, as if it were a matter of a paper that had to be signed:

Here Lies  
POULOU . .

And he went home again. He was free, peaceful  
Poor Poulou was dead It was in writing.

## II

“Hey there, Maluque !” called his friends from their doorways “Come on in a moment. You want company ”

The wife spread a rough cloth, put out glasses. While doing so she consoled Maluque.

“A little sooner or a little later, it comes to everybody There’s hardly time to turn round down here before you have to go. . . . You don’t happen to want to sell your truffle-plot ? It’s not worth very much, but it would always help you a little. And what about

your nanny-goat ? Are you going to keep it ? It will be a nuisance to a widower."

So it went on, from house to house, all down the road. It made Maluque thoughtful. He possessed a few goods: a vine which gave a vatful of six casks good year and bad, a thicket of small oaks near the cottage and a fine field of lucerne. Not to mention the garden, where the melons yellowed on the bricks in the summer, where the mad-apples shone like full flasks. Three or four glasses of muscatel and a few drops of peach-brandy had made Maluque feel sorry for himself. He went home sad, subdued, along the field-paths hardened by the frost, for his cottage, which a hedge sheltered from the north wind, was set at about two gunshots' carry from the hamlet.

And then he ran across Crouzille, the pedlar woman, who goes about the countryside, from farm-house to farm-house, with silk cord, reels of thread, brass pins, and trinkets. Crouzille also acts as lovers' go-between. A notorious character at the beck of housewives with anything questionable on hand. But at forty-three she was still pleasant to look at. Without making herself out to be other than she was, she knew how to dress interestingly. People turned round, without knowing why, to look at her as she went across the fields.

"Here you are all by yourself, then," she said to old Maluque.

He sighed.

"Eh, I'm not finding it too bad."

"And you've no reason to. I'll look in, now and then, to see if you want anything."

"Glad to see you, Crouzille."

He watched her go off in a noise of wooden shoes,

showing the nape of her neck. At the end of fifty paces she turned her head; Maluque pretended to be examining a walnut tree packed half-way up the trunk with manure and earth. The sun was going down in red in the frozen sky. Maluque had happened to meet Crouzille a hundred times like this . . . All the same, it was sad, those grey trees and that woman going away.

### III

The evenings passed easily enough at first. The memory of Poulou still filled Maluque's eyes and ears. When he had fed the goat the old man cooked for a moment; then he laid the fire for the evening, filled his pipe and uncorked the wine. He waited then for sleep. When the silence weighed upon him he went out into the yard and fetched a branch of pine, which he threw on to the fire-dogs. It took the place of Poulou. Sociable wood, pine; it chatters and explodes, sings like a grasshopper, and makes itself known all over the house. As the nights got colder his neighbours hardly ever came out. Maluque would almost have admitted now that he missed the affliction of Poulou.

Fortunately Crouzille came, with her basket full of haberdashery and news. She was very willing to try the muscatel and warm her hands, which were finely shaped, she seemed to hold them out for Maluque's inspection as much as to the fire. Then she went off again, making the frozen ground cry out. But her image stayed sitting there, on the straw chair, in front of the goblet.

And it was at this stage that Maluque began to sleep badly. He remembered Poulou's continual rages, he

saw the old woman's fist moving round his cherrywood pipe, her four yellow teeth, and her eyes, which at those times danced like will-o'-the-wisps. To reassure himself he thought of the oak cross, of the testimony of the epitaph, of all the unmistakable regularity of the funeral ceremony. But the bitter night was full of strange noises and unknown footsteps made the floor creak.

"Bah!" he said to himself. "A bit of a chill."

And it was true that the morning dissipated the bogies of the night. But in order to do away with nocturnal disturbances in future, Maluque emptied the stable and the poultry-yard. He sold his hens and his goat. He could buy some liqueurs in wide-bottomed bottles now; after a time one gets tired of the best muscatel. Besides, the goat was no longer giving any milk. It had taken the crabbed Poulou, who knew a good many rustic recipes, all her time to make the goat find five little spoonfuls of cream—the five sous of the Wandering Jew, if you like.

It might have been thought that Crouzille scented the fine flagons that old Maluque kept in a row in his cupboard. She came oftener and stayed later. She seemed put out that the goat and the poultry had been sold. The old man, listening to her, found that she had eyes of warm malice; he noted that she had not a single grey hair.

In the evenings he thought hard about Crouzille. Why not marry her? But the wind made the door slam and snuffled underneath it like a dog trying to get in; and Maluque's superstitious soul was troubled.

Nevertheless, old, saddened, could he live all alone in this lost house? It was not reasonable. But to argue

with Poulou—above all, now that she was dead ! She had sworn that she would come and pull him by the feet. She would do as she had said. It was only the goat that was more obstinate than Poulou. Must Maluque go to the end of his days unaided, then ? Could he not console himself with some pleasant company for twenty years of mutterings ?

One day he said to Crouzille, after the second glass of liqueur :

“How would you like it, my dear, to have a house like this to look after ?”

“Very well, Maluque,” she said, “for there’s nothing wanting in it but a housewife.”

Upon that they gave each other a hand, and the old man decided to have all the papers put in order the next day. Crouzille went off across the sleeping fields later than usual ; the moon hung in the branches of the planes like the horn of a goat. Soon, across the level landscape, the woman looked no taller than a stalk of broom. Then, about to go inside again, Maluque was taken with a shivering. Clouds were running over the sky in a mad pack. The winter trees, the emaciated trees, were making noises in the wind like skeletons ; one of them, trailing a crooked branch, suggested the macabre movement of a mower. Maluque, terrified, took refuge indoors.

However, after something to drink he felt better. Was a hardy old fellow like him going to pay heed to ghost stories ? Nonsense ! As time passes, one thing comes after another. After Poulou, Crouzille. That’s how it is in life. He went to bed and slept.

## IV

What time could it be ? Maluque, awake with a jump, listened to the night. A thick darkness filled the room ; noises prowled round the house. A hand scratched at the shutter, shook the door. A voice muttered

It was Poulou, without a doubt, who had come back and was trying to get in. A terrible fear held the old man in his bed, his mouth was fixed, his arm rigid. God help him, there was a dry rattling noise against the door-step ! Were not those the bells, in the distance, that were tolled for the dead ?

And now the door, downstairs, opened with the familiar creak. A foot hesitated on the first stair, reached the second . . . And all the time that dry rattling noise . . . then something brushing softly against the wall. .

The steps approaching gave back to old Maluque his power of movement. He leapt up, took his heavy thorn stick, and standing at the top of the stairs, he shouted, mad with fright

“Don’t come up, Poulou ! Don’t come up or I’ll bash you !”

A sneer answered him. And the staggering and obscure ascent went on

Then old Maluque, with the oath of a damned soul, let fly a great blow of his stick into the darkness. There was a little crack, then a heavy fall carried away by the impetus, the old man went head first down the stairs.

The next day Crouzille, who had done her hair in a new way, found Maluque lying dead in his nightshirt before the open door, with his head smashed in, near his thorn stick and a goat’s horn.

Disaster had come upon the village that night. The cottage of Récavillières, the road-mender, had been burnt to the ground he had lost everything. All that was left to him was his she-goat, old and unproductive, which he had bought some time before from Maluque. Frightened by the flames and the bells, she had run away into the fields, dragging her chain after her. They caught her next day near the house of her old master—but one of her horns was missing.

## Song in the Hebrides

BY R. N. CURREY

The soil so poor that we must set  
Sea-weed in crevices of rock  
To bed our few potatoes; scrape  
Thin, stony furrows for our oats;  
Raise scanty crops and stunted sheep  
Under salt spray; dig out and stack  
Wet peats for cottage fires; scale  
The cliffs for sea-gulls' eggs; drive keels  
Like ploughshares through green tides to bring  
Reluctant silver from the sea;  
Water and land being barren, sow  
The fallow tracts of air with song.



# The Knifegrinder

BY EDWARD MUNRO

PARKER STREET was not pretentious. It was composed of two long rows of grey tenements, facing each other across a wide and fairly busy thoroughfare, where children played marbles along the gutters on dry days, and skipped, roller-skated, and enjoyed themselves noisily on any kind of day. A respectable, working-class street, it lay between two of the main south-going roads from Edinburgh, and was consequently not without its own importance—as a row of bright and busy shops testified.

It was somehow strange in that little sub-centre of city life to see even one shop in the row closed, and with a "To Let" sign nailed above the door. It was even more strange when one reflected that it was, or rather had been, the only butcher's shop in the street: for the Edinburgh working-man is no more a vegetarian than the majority of his fellow-men.

As Mrs. Macaskill was saying: "It fair makes ye sorry for puir Mr. Johnson tae see that shop boarded up. He was aye sich a nice man, wi' a cheery word for ye when ye went in for the meat in the mornin'. An' he aye selt gude steak—cheap, min' ye! If there's wan thing Macaskill likes for his denner, it's a nice bit o' steak. Puir Mr. Johnson!"

Mrs. Robertson and Mrs. Macdonald nodded their heads in sympathy, and the three old ladies stood for a moment on the pavement repeating mournfully, "Puir Mr. Johnson !"

"But what could a body dae?" interjected Mrs. Robertson. "I couldna for the life o' me hae bought onythin', gude an' cheap as Mr. Johnson's stuff aye was, efter—ye ken what ! The thocht o' that bonnie lass—an' the bluid, the bluid, a' ower the pavement !"

Her tones were full of horror, for Mrs Robertson had seen the tragedy of Parker Street—the tragedy which first brought its existence to the notice of the outside world—and she would thrill with horror at the memory of it till her dying day

When he drove his little outfit through the streets of Edinburgh, a silent little man behind a fat and slow-moving pony, the children shouted after him "Beaver! There's Auld Beaver!" But he did not mind their shouts. He was fond of children; and besides, he was secretly rather proud of his long, grey beard. He was very apprehensive of the day when he might see a better beard than his own: it was a special prayer of his that such a day should never come, and the gods had so far smiled on the meek little man's one vanity. The name had caught on, Older people took it from the children, and wherever he was known throughout the city, people called him "Auld Beaver."

He was *well* known, too, in all the streets where he came with his little vehicle to sharpen cutlery. While

he was busy treading away, with the sparks flying from under the knives and scissors, the children always trooped up to watch his art with edged tools. The housewives with the shopping-bags over their arms often stopped to have a crack with him, for he picked up all sorts of interesting gossip on his rounds. Tradesmen talked to him from their shop-doors when business was slack, and everyone with a moment to waste, and not a few without it, liked to exchange a smile and a word with Auld Beaver, while the sparks sizzled under the steel, and the knives and scissors acquired a new usefulness.

He had no friends but these people, for he lived alone in a little house near his pony's stable. Here he had two cosy rooms, a comfortable fireside chair, a pipe-rack, and the most marvellous collection of Western novels and magazines you ever saw. His evenings were spent enthralled in fast-moving events in Arizona and South Dakota. Here with his pipe after tea, he lived in an atmosphere of searing bullets and galloping cowboys, villainous rustlers and crooked sheriffs, crowded saloons and lonely canyons.

Every night at 10.30 he came back to Scotland (not without an effort), wound up the clock and went to bed. Every morning he rose at seven, saw to his pony, got his own breakfast, and started out to work by half-past eight, to spend the day giving an edge to other people's cutlery.

By ten o'clock, one bright morning in June, Auld Beaver was in Parker Street, sharpening up the knives, choppers and other implements belonging to Mr. Johnson, the butcher, and having a cheery crack with that gentleman himself. The butcher was arranging

his wares on the large marble slab in his window, which opened half-way up from the bottom. They were kindred souls, and dearly loved a gossip with each other on the infrequent occasions when they did meet. But business called the butcher away, and he left the old man to meditate over his work.

Auld Beaver carefully manipulated the knife he was holding over the revolving stone, his keen old eyes watching its progress to a sharper and sharper edge. It was a never-ending delight to him to put a fine edge on a knife—especially a butcher's knife. He felt somehow as if he were perfecting the instrument, and it never crossed his mind that he was sharpening knives only that they might in time become blunt again. His thoughts were ever on the immediate result of his work. While he was still sharpening it, he could almost feel the red meat falling away on either side of the keen blade in Mr. Johnson's hands. Such a feeling of effortless division was a sensual delight to him. All his domestic knives had the keenest of edges, and he was not more delighted in the eating of bread or cheese or meat, then he was in using his cutlery on them.

And so he never made a hasty job, but sharpened every tool with careful precision—as he was now doing in front of Johnson's shop in Parker Street. He stopped to smile at bonny Meg Kinloch as she walked quickly past on her way to buy potatoes.

"See you again, Beaver," she called.

He waved back cheerfully. A fine lass, Meg. He had known her since she was running about in school clothes. She had always been a beautiful girl, and a good girl,

too; for now she was staying at home to look after her father and invalid mother, with a consequent loss to her own pocket and her dress allowance. Not that Meg needed new clothes to show off her beauty, it could not be hidden. Yes, she was a fine lass, Meg Kinloch, and she always had a kind word for Auld Beaver.

He inspected the edge of the knife critically, was satisfied, and took up another. His mind was full of the beauty of sharp steel, and the loveliness of its shining surface. It occurred to him that he was perhaps alone in his appreciation of the beauty of a keen edge. He felt saddened at the thought.

Men had no longer any thought for the keen edge; their safety no longer depended on it. He remembered with a glow the stories of his old schoolmaster about the knights of early times—the scenes of swinging swords with high-sounding names like “Excalibur.” That was King Arthur’s sword, that he got out of the lake. His thoughts turned to a film he had seen lately about Frenchmen—musketeers they were called. He remembered with delight the shining rapiers that had flashed from their scabbards in various parts of the story.

Men had appreciated his craft in those days, he felt sure, and he thought he would like some day to hold such a glittering weapon in his hand. But nowadays it was nothing but bullets and bombs men used—or poison gas, that made them die, not swiftly, like the sword, but slowly in awful agony.

He began to wish he had lived long ago—about Mary Queen of Scots’ time would have done, by all accounts. He laid down the sharpened knife, and got

to work with Mr. Johnson's chopper. Yes, he would have liked life in those times. Plenty of excitement, and sharp weapons shining in combat. He imagined with a thrill the sensation of using a sword. His thoughts changed to Queen Elizabeth. He would like to have used a sword on her. He could not imagine a woman treating her own kin as she had treated Mary. It was not natural.

Poor Mary! People said she was very brave at her execution, in spite of the executioner's bungling. He would only have needed one stroke if Auld Beaver had sharpened the axe. He saw in imagination the keen blade descending on her neck. It must be awful to have your head chopped off. He almost felt the edge shearing through the white flesh. Inconsequently, a line of "Annie Laurie" slipped into his mind—"Her neck was like the swan." How often he had sung that to flatter Jean Murray—the bright, laughing sweetheart of his youth. How bonnie she was, he thought wistfully, and her face and figure were clear in his mind.

It was not often the old man thought of the present or the past. He was too busy with his work, as a rule, and with dreams of what never had been, and never could be. But now the thought of Jean came upon him so strongly that he forgot the chopper in his hand in the intensity of his memory. Happy days they had spent together—all gone and irrecoverable now. A bonny, bonny lass! His lips moved to the old tune—"Her neck was like the swan." Ay, many's the time he had kissed her warm, smooth, lovely throat. Maybe Mary Stuart had a throat like that. He shuddered to think of the axe descending. . . .

Again the sensation came to him of wielding the instrument—half horrifying, half sensuously thrilling. It must be a curious feeling to shear through someone's neck like that. He examined the edge of the chopper. Fine! It was as sharp as he could make it.

"Hallo, Auld Beaver," said a gay voice beside him. "You're a stranger, surely."

It was Meg Kinloch on her way home again.

"Ay," he returned, smiling. "I see ye're bonnier than ever, lassie."

She retorted laughingly, throwing back her head in pure enjoyment of her own joke. Her throat was smooth, and brown with the sun—a firm, lovely column of living flesh. The vision of the axe flashed into Auld Beaver's mind. The butcher's chopper was in his hands . . .

She did not look so lovely there on the pavement, he thought, with her black hair in the dust and blood all over her breast. He did not like to look at her once lovely neck.

He stood there till the police came, his mind in a complete daze. It had all happened so quickly, he did not know why or how. Nor did he know when they hanged him two months later.

Parker Street would not buy from Mr. Johnson any more. It was *his* chopper that Auld Beaver had used. And Mrs. Robertson had seen the blood.

"I juist couldna tak' onythin' oot o' his shop efter yon," she said often. "He was a nice man, an obleegin' man, but the thocht o' meat oot o' *his* shop fair makes

me scunner ! But I'm right sorry for him," she added, looking at the empty, forlorn shop among its prosperous neighbours. "Puir Mr Johnson !"

Mrs. Macaskill and Mrs. Macdonald nodded agreement.

"Puir Mr. Johnson !"



## River in Venezuela

BY WILLIAM MAXWELL

STEPHANIE finished her packing before noon and went to the end of the passageway to look at the river. She was a little disappointed. What she saw was like river country anywhere, like river country in Illinois or Ohio. The banks were firm to the water's edge with trees and tangled creepers, none of them any great size and all the same monotonous green, and the river was muddy. The ship seemed to her much more interesting. White tropical sunlight lay on the uncovered hatches and on the roofs of stables, which had been put up ten days ago along the forward deck before the ship left New York. The stables were empty now, the sleek Missouri mules already at work in the cane fields of St. Croix and Barbados. A seaman, his trousers rolled to the knee, was washing down the deck with a hose, and Stephanie found herself looking at him rather than at the river. Except for an occasional dugout that appeared alongside the freighter there was no way, Stephanie told herself, no possible way that she would have known she was in South America.

A kitchen boy appeared on the deck below her. The seaman stopped to watch the kitchen boy empty his slops to leeward. When the boy disappeared, the seaman returned to his scrubbing and Stephanie went

up on the hurricane deck, hoping that Lewis would be there. The half-dozen other passengers on board had already said good-bye to her several times, but Lewis, who was the only one she liked, had said nothing. Whenever she spoke to Lewis of leaving the ship at Caripito he withdrew somehow and left her talking to herself.

There was no sense to it, really, because they'd had such a good time coming down the islands and on shore trips, seeing things together. And it was not as if she were here to stay, as if she were going to spend the rest of her life in a Standard Oil camp in Venezuela. After her sister's baby came, in five months, six at the most, she would be sailing back down the San Juan River, probably on this very boat. So there was no reason they wouldn't someday be seeing each other again. Lewis was certainly presentable enough and would be a nice person to go around with in New York. Or if they were both too busy to see much of each other, they could at least send cards back and forth at Christmas and Easter.

When Lewis was not among the passengers on the hurricane deck, Stephanie went forward, looking for him, down the ladder and along the row of empty stables until she came to the fo'c'sle. There she found him, sitting on a wooden box, his shirt off and his bare sunburned back resting against a mass of anchor chain.

"Hello," Stephanie said. "Found you at last."

"Hello," he said, and moved over so that she could have part of his box to sit on. It was an ordinary soap-box, but clean, Stephanie decided. To be on the safe side, she drew her white linen coat up around her before

she sat down. Lewis waited until she was settled and then produced cigarettes and matches, but for some time he said nothing. Stephanie began to wonder if perhaps she oughtn't to have come. Perhaps she ought to have waited until he came to her cabin to say good-bye. But then he did speak, with his deliberate and familiar foolishness. "That's Venezuela over there," he said, pointing.

"Think of that," Stephanie said.

"I am thinking of it," he said, and smiled at her as he reached for his white sweatshirt. The smile was somewhat, but not entirely, reassuring. And instead of putting the sweatshirt on, as she had expected him to, he drew it across his back and twisted the sleeves into a knot in front, under his chin. Then he leaned back against the anchor chain and, with his face partly turned from her, stared at the river.

Stephanie felt obliged, out of politeness, to look at the river too. At intervals there would be an opening in the bank where a small creek joined the San Juan, and at such places Stephanie could see a little way into the jungle, where the air appeared to be green and shadowy. But that only happened now and then, and so far as Stephanie could make out, the river was going to be exactly the same, mile after mile. She kept turning, therefore, to look at Lewis. There was nothing especially noticeable about him either, she decided. He worked in an insurance office in John Street and he was on a vacation because he hadn't been very well, and there was nothing in the least remarkable about him except his eyes, which were so large and brown and lonely. When he closed his eyes there was no life left in his face and he seemed quite old, though he was

actually about her age, Stephanie guessed—about twenty-four. And his hair needed cutting.

"Hills," he said now, breaking the second long silence. Stephanie followed the line of his bare arm and saw them, low and curved and running along in a series of green ridges.

"Caripito isn't on the river," Lewis said "It's back a ways. About eight miles, according to the guidebook And there's a little railroad that runs down to the pier."

Stephanie nodded "You can't tell me anything about Caripito My sister Dot has been doing that in letters for nearly a year. I feel as if I was born there '"

"I'm sorry," Lewis said, and put his cigarette out on the deck and stamped on it

"Don't be sorry '" Stephanie said earnestly—too earnestly, she thought But with someone you just *liked* very much, with someone who was as sensitive as Lewis, you had to be careful Even when you said something absurd, like "Don't be sorry," you could seem to mean more than you really meant to For example, that night when she and Lewis had stood at the railing, watching the lights go on in Fort-de-France. Lewis had said, "It's sad being at sea," and without thinking, without considering at all how it might sound, she had said, "You mustn't be sad '" And embarrassed him, so that he said good night to her after a minute or two, and went below.

But he was not embarrassed now, apparently. "In New York," he said, "it's just beginning to be summer "

"I know it," Stephanie said, and flipped her cigarette high over the side of the ship. For the first time it occurred to her that she didn't even know where in New York Lewis lived. In the Fifties, she had heard

him telling one of the passengers. But *where* in the Fifties? That was something she'd have to find out before she left the ship. For the time being, however, she wanted to talk about more interesting things. About Dot, and Dot's baby, and Dot's husband. About Roger's near-sighted way of looking at people, and his fits of worrying, and how he always wore his hat on the back of his head. She had been saving these things. She hadn't told Lewis any of them. Nor how the Standard Oil Company had assured Roger that if he and Dot could stick it out two more years, they'd bring him back to the States and give him a really good job. Lewis might not be interested in such matters, but then again he might. As Stephanie leaned forward to tell him, a bright-red bird flew suddenly past the ship, and another, and then a whole squadron of them, a little above the water.

"Flamingos!" Stephanie exclaimed, but they were smaller than flamingos and more scarlet. They flew by, one after another, unmindful of the grey hull of the ship or of the ship's passengers calling to one another in excitement.

After they had all gone past, Lewis turned and looked at Stephanie. She knew that he was going to do exactly that, and was ready. It had happened time and time again, coming down the islands. Whenever anything was too beautiful or too extraordinary for one person to stand looking at all by himself, Lewis had turned—instinctively, it seemed—to her. Only now he did not smile or touch the sleeve of her coat the way he sometimes did, but turned back to the red birds and followed them with his eyes. At the next bend of the river the birds swung sharply to the left and were gone.

"My God," Lewis said wistfully, "did you ever see anything like it in all your life?" And then, abruptly, as if he didn't wish to talk about it, as if the whole incident were dismissed from his mind, he stood up and began drawing on his sweatshirt.

Stephanie listened for the sound of the ship's engines. The birds had not been afraid, though the silence to which they were accustomed must have been driven back from the river, miles back, by the engines churning.

When Lewis asked, through the top of his sweatshirt, "Will there be anyone there to meet you?" Stephanie was startled. Her mind was still full of scarlet birds flying.

"Roger will be there," she said quietly, and stood up and straightened her skirt. The freighter would soon be tying up to the pier at Caripito, and from this moment on there would probably be nothing but shouting and noise, baggage to be attended to, and tips. And in the midst of all that she would have to find time somehow to say good-bye to Lewis, who was now holding out his hand to her so that she could get safely down the ladder from the fo'c'sle to the deck. "At least I *think* Roger will be there," she told him.

At the door of her cabin she turned, uncertain whether to ask Lewis for his address now or wait until she saw him at lunch. She heard herself saying, "The boat will be here for several days, you know. If you get bored, you can always come up to the house for a drink." And she hesitated, wondering whether it might possibly not be convenient for Dot and Roger to have company. But then of course it would be convenient, she decided, and they'd certainly want to meet someone she'd enjoyed knowing as much as she'd enjoyed

knowing Lewis "Roger has very good whisky," she said before she noticed that Lewis was standing with his jaw set, and his eyes set, waiting "If you like whisky," she said.

"Thanks," he said "Thanks ever so much," and the blood rushed upward into his face.

It was that which Stephanie couldn't get out of her mind afterward, even with the door of the stateroom closed between her and his awful, awkward explanations—how much he admired her, and what a swell time they'd had together on the ship, and how he was sorry he wasn't in love with her but he just wasn't, so what was the use? What in God's name was the use?

# Hearth

BY JOAN CHARLTON

Talk like mission furniture,  
Having square corners and the angular squat unloveliness of all sectarian provision, the uncomfortable proprieties of the antimacassar,  
Stagnates and slothfully looks for feeding  
In a house of present mode  
Women, showing artfully their amber nails,  
Discuss euthanasia and the rights of man;  
Through windows sleekly stealing in  
Come the long echoes of the outward reef,  
Like the chintz sofa of a redplush drawing-room,  
And all the crazy sampler of the coast.

St. Francis would not recognise his city.  
They have driven birds and beasts away,  
And the angels come not to Los Angeles,  
Softly stepping through the shuttered rooms,  
But with contemptuous flick of a thundercloud  
Throw mission, mansion, horsehair sofa, to the bonfire  
Eating everlastingly the heart of Cotapaxi.





Cotswold Picnic.

J. C. Tarr  
1928

COTSWOLD PICNIC Wood-engraving by J. C. Tarr

# The Red Flag

BY GEORGE BELLAIRS

JACQUES BASTIDE was a good workman and skilfully wielded a pick and shovel for the City of Paris at a wage of two pounds a week. He was happiest when at his job, for his domestic life was one long torture to him. The whole trouble with Jacques was that he was too meek and mild. He came of peasant stock, and always had the air of a bewildered countryman up for a holiday in the city, and his humility caused people to take advantage of him. His inoffensive nature made him the prey of bullies and opportunists of all kinds. For example, his wife's mother had selected him for her son-in-law long before he even knew her daughter. He had lived in Rouen then, and had frequented the third-rate café kept by the old woman. Madame Matthieu's little property was not paying its way, and soon she would be faced with the choice of either going to live on her son's small farm, where, like a true Norman, he would make her work hard for her keep, or else marrying off her daughter to someone who would harbour them both. She singled out the good-natured Bastide for the honour, and now she was living with them in their tenement home, in complete command of the man, his wife and their year-old baby. Slowly under the old harridan's nagging and bullying

he lost all heart. He hardly knew his own wife, so much did the older woman monopolise them both, and often when he contemplated the present and future of his existence, he wished he were dead

Unlike most of his mates, who were huge men with bulging muscles, Jacques Bastide was small and wiry, but that and the strain of home life in no way impaired his skill with a spade, for every day he started at street level and briskly dug himself out of sight, throwing up piles of earth as he did so. He was always worth his place in the best gangs of excavators, and when they took up the tramlines in the Rue du Louvre, in Paris, last year and put in new sewers at the same time, he was there, sweating with the rest among the tar-boilers, piles of earth and heaps of paving-stones and old iron. For weeks the "Rue Barrée" signs stood at each end of the street, which is a short cut between two great traffic arteries, whilst crowds of men toiled and scuttered about like ants in the no-man's land between

One day the foreman's expert eye observed that it would be possible to run a single file of traffic through the street and he laid his plans accordingly. The "Road-Up" boards were removed and replaced by human sentinels armed with red and green flags. Everyone knows how the thing works. Whilst one man is waving his green banner at one end and urging his stream through the narrow gorge, the other is holding back a flock of vehicles at the opposite end by brandishing a red rag at them. Then each changes the colour of his signal and carts and motors begin to move in the reverse direction.

On the first afternoon of the re-opening of half the street, however, the sentry at one entrance lost his head

at the sight of the turbulent stream which he had dammed, and in panic waved the wrong flag. Two rows of lorries and cars poured into the semi-Rue du Louvre from opposite ends, and met. Hopeless confusion reigned and a colossal impasse occurred, which took a squad of gendarmes over an hour to unravel. The noise of arguing and hooting from the rival queues was heard over half Paris, and sounded like the sustained cheering and groaning of a football crowd when a goal is scored. There was a rush from all parts to join in the spectacle. Even the excited stock-jobbers, who carry on a war of quotation screaming on the steps of the Bourse and whose united shouts rise like a shrill chant from the heart of Paris, ceased their noisy peddling of rubbers and gold-mines and hurried to seek the rival Babel. To add to the confusion, two curs, infected by the noise of battle, flew at each other's throats, and merged in a whirling mass of hair and foam, charging and rolling among the stationary vehicles. Their yelping and snarling roused the primitive instincts of all the other dogs in the neighbourhood, which, unable to penetrate to the battle front owing to the surging human throng, barked, howled and snapped on the fringe of the mob like hungry wolves.

Four taximen and an old bore who remembered 1870 and, awakened from snoozing by the noise of turmoil, had blundered into the fray quavering "Aux barricades," were rushed to hospital after a free fight for rights of way, equality and fraternity, and the twenty policemen who hurried to the spot used their batons freely. Finally, the burrowing workmen in the reserved portion of the arena emerged from their holes stripped to the waist and smeared with a mixture of

clay, tar and sweat, and joined the police in roughly untying the knotted traffic and dispersing the crowd. The foreman, who all the time had been weeping and dancing with rage behind the rope enclosure, rushed to the paralysed signalman who had been the cause of all the pandemonium, waved his fists in his face, snatched his flag and sacked him on the spot. At length, all that remained of the fracas was the curs, each still seeking the other's windpipe or jugular vein for a quick despatch, and for the most part biting thin air through excitement. A workman separated them by flinging a shovelful of sharp road flints over their heads. Mistaking the stinging stones for some hitherto unrevealed reserve in his adversary's armoury, each of the combatants released his hold and fled yelling with pain and fright. Work began again, and the man-in-charge looked despairingly round for another sentinel. Jacques Bastide had always struck him as being a cool one, so he called him, gave him the two coloured flags and told him to get on with the job and see that he did it properly unless he, too, wanted to be unemployed. Bastide took up his stand, self-consciously unfurled his banners, and the track was re-opened.

Directing the traffic was not a difficult operation, and for ten minutes all went well. Jacques allowed his partner at the other terminus to set the pace and they worked in unison with the vehicles flowing steadily and without undue congestion. Suddenly, the first hitch occurred at Bastide's end. Without specially noticing the types of cars he was holding up, the man dropped his red flag before the eyes of a haughty servant in uniform driving a luxurious limousine. The chauffeur's face assumed a livid hue and he poked his

head through the open side-window "Gimme green," he said "You can't do that to me The Minister of Propaganda's in this car." The traffic was flowing from the other end, so Bastide stood his ground and faced the abuse of the man hanging out beside him Then, one of the doors opened and the face so beloved by caricaturists was thrust out. "Let the man be, Aristide," said the dapper little man with a long pointed nose and a heavily-corded pince-nez balanced precariously on the end of it. "He represents law and order, and to him even the Government must bow Do your duty, my man, without fear or favour," added the Cabinet's publicity expert, knowing well that this interlude would be faithfully reported to his credit in the evening papers. "Thank you, M. le Ministre," replied the abashed workman, and his shoulders grew more square and he felt a sense of added power surge through him. He flashed his green banner with a flourish before the chauffeur, whose lips emitted a string of silent oaths, and the car passed on.

After that Jacques Bastide slowly realised the importance and responsibility resting on his shoulders. His opinion of himself improved and the exhilaration of stopping or starting the chariots of the mighty acted as a tonic to his flagging spirits. He strengthened his dictatorship by taking the initiative from his colleague at the other end of the thoroughfare and himself deciding for how long each stream of traffic should hold the stage. A series of incidents followed which impressed him further with a sense of dignity and self-esteem. He stopped the taxis of three of the "immortals" on their way in palm-decorated uniforms to the Academy. They accepted his ruling with docile

grace, and one of them gave him a friendly nod in parting. He flagged the car of a well-known follies dancer, too, and, as he changed from red to green she flashed at him that dazzling smile which she had popularised in advertising a famous dentifrice. He thought he wasn't such a bad fellow after all. One by one the great ones of Paris paid homage to his power. The mayor of the arrondissement, two Deputies, a Senator, an actress from the Comédie Française driving with a philanderer, a charabanc full of American sightseers, and a cinema star who was turning all the servant girls and midnettes of Paris crazy with love, stopped and started again at the will of the promoted excavator, who only a couple of hours ago had been wishing he were digging his own grave

Just before the night shift relieved him Jacques took part in an incident which added to his prestige in the eyes of his comrades of the pick and shovel. A taxi-driver known as Le Buffle, because his technique consisted of lowering his head, squaring his shoulders and charging madly with his cab at his objective, appeared on the scene and ignored the signalman's ruling. Le Buffle was the terror of Paris streets, but a great favourite of journalists wishing to travel from scenes of sensation to newspaper offices and telephones, or with those eager to rush from station to station in the shortest possible time. He earned high fees for his buffalo tactics, sweeping aside trade rivals and all who challenged his progress, whilst his huge physique made him an unsavoury customer with whom to argue. Jacques signalled him to halt. The red-flag seemed to produce the reaction of bulls to toreadors under similar circumstances, and the Buffalo, disdaining it with a snort,

endeavoured to speed along the track before the freed traffic at the other end could enter and oppose him. He misjudged his distance and soon was in danger of collision with oncoming cars. His fare ordered him to stop, and it looked as if the commotion of earlier in the day was going to be repeated. Hastily fixing his red flag in a post at the end of his beat, the outraged Bastide ran to the rebel taximan, who by this time was out of his seat, threatening all comers. As the signalman approached the Buffalo turned on him, breathing hard and gesturing dangerously. The enraged Jacques hit him between the eyes and felled him on a heap of rubble at the roadside. The huge taxi-driver shook himself and was preparing to annihilate his adversary, when suddenly his passenger alighted and tapped him on the shoulder. "That will do," he said, and taking a whistle from his pocket blew on it a note well-known to the malefactors of Paris. Two gendarmes seemed to appear from nowhere. "We have been waiting for something like this, Buffle, and now your career on the streets is finished," said the Sub-Prefect of Police, for it was he, and ordered the subdued rebel to drive himself to jail. Roars of laughter and back-slappings by his pals sent Jacques Bastide on his way home after the night-watchmen with their coloured lanterns had relieved him.

The gas-lamps had been lighted and shone pale green among the trees of the Place du Théâtre as Jacques walked home to his rooms in the Marais. He felt at peace with the world, and he picked up his feet and swung his arms like one who has authority over his fellows. At last he reached his tenement and climbed the two flights of stairs to the flat he rented. His



neighbour's empty rubbish pails were, as usual, outside the Bastides' door. In the past the peace-loving navy had let them remain there. Now, he kicked them downstairs with a loud clatter and yelled "Keep your rubbish to yourself" in the face of the alarmed next-door nuisance, who had popped out from his hutch like a jack-in-the-box. In the little living-room of their flat Madame Bastide and her mother were gossiping, and there was no meal ready. They always made him wait half-an-hour on principle. He wasn't waiting any more, people waited for him now. "Where's my grub?" he thundered. Madame Matthieu was the spokesman of the party, and she remained silent, so her daughter was mute as well. "Get it right away," yelled Bastide with authority, "or I'll eat at the café and knock it off next week's allowance." The astonished old woman disappeared into the cupboard which they called the kitchen and emerged with a plate of greasy beef and carrots, swimming in thin brown gravy. "Hasn't the doctor said I haven't to eat grease?" bellowed the husband. "You'll eat what's put before you, or do without," screeched the old woman struggling to retain the upper hand. Jacques, remembering the obedience of academicians, politicians and tragedians rose to his feet. With a sweep of his hand he drove the plate and its messy contents crashing into the far corner of the room and turned to face his astonished mother-in-law. "Now get me some bread and cheese." The flabbergasted grandmother obeyed without more ado, whilst his wife stood by, her face reflecting alternate surprise and admiration for her rebellious man.

Having satisfied his appetite, the labourer turned to his son, sleeping in the cradle. "Leave him alone and

let him sleep," nattered the mother-in-law, still endeavouring to recover her authority. The father took no heed, but lifted the child from his bed and commenced to dandle him in his arms. The sleepy youngster, scared at his sudden change of position, started to howl dismally and then, finding who had caused the upheaval, changed his tune and gurgled and prattled gleefully. "My little Hercule," clucked his father. The old woman again raised her voice. "You know very well he was Christened François-Xavier," she shrieked, "so why call him anything else?" Bastide remembered the long family wrangle in which the old girl had won as usual and endowed his son with the name of his maternal grandfather. "Hercule's the name I wanted, and Hercule it is—priest or no priest," he asserted and gently putting the newly-baptized child back in his cradle he strode into his bedroom and changed into his second-best suit. Then, slipping on his cap, he departed to the café round the corner without a further word of challenge from anyone.

The Café-Bar de Cancale was the gathering ground of a motley crew of all types of Parisians. One could dine at the marble-topped tables or lounge at the zinc-covered counter with a boisterous crowd of honest workmen, glassy-eyed boozers, time-servers, drink-cadgers, card-sharpers, racing tipsters, braggarts, prostitutes and their dissolute male counterparts. Not that the place was badly run or disorderly. It just resounded with the noises of eating, drinking, boasting, touting and soliciting, but beyond that—well, Adèle, the proprietress, seated on a small platform behind the cash desk, tight-lipped, heavy-jowled, with her ample bosom overflowing from the top of her stays under a crackling

cover of satin, saw that decency and propriety were observed as far as her eyes could see, and that was a long way. As a rule when Bastide entered he might just as well have been an invisible man, for no one seemed to notice it. On this night, however, something about his gait, his shoulders and the tilt of his cap seemed to attract the eyes of all the clients. "Has he come into money or something?" they asked each other, and many of them greeted him

Behind the main room was a smaller, parlour-like sanctuary reserved for the regular and favoured customers, and to this Jacques made his way through an atmosphere reeking with sweat, cheap scents, tobacco, spilled beer and fried onions from the table d'hôte, and entered through the curtained doorway. Until a few nights ago, he had had his own seat there among the rest of the limited and reserved chairs. Then a newcomer, a commercial traveller fresh from Provence and of boundless effrontery, had interloped, stolen his place and supplanted him at the card-table. At first, everyone had expected Bastide to assert his rights by a show of strength if necessary, but nothing had happened. He had simply walked out and left the usurper in possession of the field. "He's a coward as well as a lout," one of his old cronies remarked, and after that the spiritless navvy was treated with contempt. To-night, remembering the homage of the great, Bastide marched to his chair, and without a word jerked the Provençal, who already occupied it, to the floor and stood calmly waiting for the sequel. The noisy bluffer, finding a resolute adversary in place of a hesitant clod, retreated beyond the curtain and was seen no more.

That night, Jacques Bastide was a new man. He played cards intelligently and won twenty francs from the sharks who regularly fleeced him. He drank a lot and boasted freely about his new job, its responsibilities and increased pay. He thought, too, that something in the nature of revelling was appropriate, so he put a franc piece in the mechanical piano and seizing Annette, the waitress, by the waist, strolled and capered inexpertly in what he thought was a modern style of dancing. Annette, scenting a substantial tip from the drunken workman, was on her best behaviour, tolerated his heavy feet, submitted with a good grace to his mauling and then, when he became importunate for more beer and a kiss, steered him into the street and left him to sober up under the plane trees of the sidewalk.

Bastide decided in a fuddled way that he had now urgent business at home and hurried to put his plans into operation. Madame Matthieu, under the pretext of nursing her daughter, had, when young François-Xavier, alias Hercule, was born, insisted on displacing the husband and installing herself with her offspring in the connubial bed. She had turned Jacques out into her own quarters, a miserable cell of a place which in the days when the tenements had been the hotels of the rich was a windowless powder-closet. Bastide had not yet mustered up courage to re-assert his conjugal rights, but now, fortified by alcohol and the events of the past day, he determined to claim his rightful resting-place. Nay, he would turn her out altogether, the old hen, and send her packing to milk cows and hoe turnups on her son's farm at Caudebec. He clumped upstairs with a resolute tread. The living-

room was in darkness, but under the doorway of the best bedroom a light showed and he could hear the bullying crone's voice raised in a high-pitched, crackling curtain-lecture to her daughter. He did not pause to listen, but flung open the door. His wife, clad in her chemise, was sitting on the bed listening to an endless harangue which Bastide's earlier conduct had provoked. The old hag, draped in a long nightgown, her thin hair braided in two stringy pigtails, was standing, candle in hand over her daughter, delivering a gummy discourse from a jaw which resembled a pair of nut-crackers.

"Get out," rumbled the conquering male, "I'm sleeping in my own bed to-night. Back to your cubby-hole." The grandmother made a pretence of indignation, but the violent demeanour of the invader silenced her and she obeyed, bearing off her candle in one hand and her clothing and false teeth in the other. She tried to carry off the change of quarters with an air of offended righteousness and was just climbing into her new bed when a great commotion outside heralded a further outbreak of hostilities. Her door was wrenched open without ceremony and a battered tin trunk was thrown in the room. "Pack that for to-morrow, too, and be off with you to Rouen. We've seen enough of you for a while," came from the gloom of the landing in an imperative voice, and she heard stockinged feet padding back to the comfortable quarters she had just evacuated under compulsion.

Back in his own room once more, her lord and master turned to his spouse. "I'm the boss here from now on and what I say goes. The old woman's off in the morning," he said facing her ferociously. "Yes, Jacques," his wife answered meekly. The navvy looked

at her and felt sorry for her as she stood there, her arms bare and her fair hair falling over her exposed shoulders "She's a pretty little thing Nicc, too, when the old girl's not about and turning her against me," he thought "Elise," he said—he had not called her by her name for many a month—"Elise, you're bonnier than any of those fine women in their fine cars," and he gave her a noisy kiss His wife smiled up at him She, too, was relieved at the turn of events, and glad to be freed from the eternal bondage of her overbearing mother She kissed him back, twining her white arms round his neck and ruffling his hair from behind "*Mon brave*," she said "My man."

Before the couple rose from bed the following morning loud clattering and bumping announced that the outraged parent was departing by the first train for Rouen without waiting to say good-bye. They let her go. An hour later Jacques set out for work whistling, and passed through the quiet streets where men were cleaning the cobbles with hosepipes and where the day's bread and milk were everywhere scattered and waiting to be claimed from railings and doorsteps by the late risers He reached the Rue du Louvie and there a surprise was waiting A mechanical signal had been installed and winked at him—red, green, red, green, as he approached "We've got a machine doing your work now, Bastide," said the foreman, "so you can go back to digging." Jacques was sorry about it, and thought a bit about departed glory and being reduced to the ranks, but he was not one to cry over spilt milk, so he shrugged his shoulders, spat on his hands and began to shovel at the good earth again. He often thinks about his day of triumph, for it was the

high spot of a simple existence, and he never tires of repeating to his mates the great truth he learned through experience. "Never let a woman boss you if you want to be happy at home," the little navvy often advises his huge but respectful comrades when, at lunch time, they tower around him, jaws working and dangerous-looking knives flashing as they hack copious helpings from their long rolls of bread. "Treat 'em rough. *Rigoureusement*. That's the way to keep 'em good." And any of his pals will tell you that he's a man who knows what he's talking about. "He's a cut above us, that Jacques," they'll say. "He ought to have been a politician."

## Ashes Without Sackcloth

BY RAIBEART ELDER

THE leaves were falling that year the times we crossed the bridge with the twist like a snake which has died in sick pain. and when we came back from the little church for the last time they were budding again. It was dusty the times we went over the fence and our shoes were powdered as a woman's evening dress gets. When we walked home on the Sundays long after the battleships came the ground was bound with the winter's moisture and the sun shone to make the buds very green and shooting her hair with gold. They were budding again to-day, David says, but I find it hard to turn my head up now, and anyway we were happiest when the leaves caressed us and the dust puffed round us like a quiet song.

They were quiet days when we sat on my coat below the bridge and watched the cars trickling down, cautious but eager. When they'd gone round the corner where the dark pines are the road would be empty again, but not still. The leaves would swirl a little, dancing like tired ones, with the wisps of dust tormenting them. Then they would begin to lie down again with only a little tremor of weariness stabbing through them but another car would pant down, or perhaps it would be just a cyclist, with his wheels humming like laden bees.



Then the brown and the red and even the golden leaves would have to leave their beds again and twist and jump by the roadside. Some would be whisked away over into the river. When they danced into the river they were swept away; then there was one dancer the less.

It was cold sometimes on the slope under the bridge when the red sun stared at us in the early evening through the stark tree branches. She would put her hand in mine and I would rub it slowly, on the back and on the front, and we would pretend it made us warm. I laid my head against hers and sometimes took her soft hair in my lips. When strands came out she picked them off my tongue laughing and we would hold them up to the sun. I said they were the colour of carrots and she said haughtily they were auburn: often I thought they even looked like the sun, tired after his day's work as he glowered through the trees. I did not say that to her, and she laughed, and said auburn or not they needed food and we would rise and go home.

We laughed much then. It is good to hear two people laugh when they are happy as we were. We used to feel sharp and alive like her hair when, crackling and swaying, it followed my comb down even to the tip of her nose wrinkling with laughter. They were quiet days, and inside we were quiet too; but not still, for we had joy inside us.

When, through the tall windows with the white uniforms passing, I saw the red sun like the field for the quarterings of the stern black trees on the hill top, I didn't want to die any more and I know she wouldn't want me to die now. Even when he's leaving

you at night time, or when he has a last look in the evening, like a traffic signal at caution, or the red head of a god, or a big yellow advertising bulb, the sun doesn't want you to die, for he's seen you when you were happy, as I was with Moira

He was there the last time I was happy, and I knew he was watching the three of us though he couldn't see one. Neither could we although Moira used to say she could feel him sometimes. She used to smile and hold up her lips, pale lips then, smiling tiredly, for me to kiss when I said maybe it was a girl. for there should only be little girls in crocus time. That was when we were still inside in our happiness, happy because we were alone and together. When the leaves were dancing we were alone because we were happy together, but when they'd gone and when they'd started to bud again we were happy in the way that makes a man big. It was a careless happiness, but we were not carefree, and we were happier because we knew we each hid much that was dark.

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The day after the battleships came to the harbour there were many leaves falling and those from the tree at our gate fell on her head as she laid it on my shoulder before I left for the city. They only stayed on her head a little while and they were beautiful there but when they blew away they left little black specks. The specks did not blow away but got flattened out on her head and made black marks. I laughed at them and she waved to me with her hair streaming over her smiling child's face as I drove away. It was always a child's face to me though she was so much

older—even when it got worn and became weary and so tired it couldn't live any more.

I found it cold that day in the city with the grey buildings looking as though there was goose flesh on them, and the pavements crunched with swirling dust like salt on a polished floor. The faces of the marching men were red and their noses shone over their half open mouths with the puffs of steam trailing out. Their feet rang on the ground, and the noise of them and the labouring trams with the harsh bells made the air harder when the wind plucked at my coat. There was confidence in the folk's faces and they were happy with proud smiles. At every corner they looked long at the newspaper bills which shouted "To Arms" before the wind tore and tattered them till they tangled themselves round your legs. The men in uniform marched and sometimes somebody would cheer or maybe there would be a woman half running and half walking as she wept alongside. Sometimes an army truck would pass, and it looked odd that the red-faced men had no steel helmets and there were no rifles pointing over the edge after the pictures we had seen. There were few young people in the grey streets except among the marching men, and the older ones looked proud, except the one who was sitting on the pavement beside a drawing of Field Marshal Johnstone. Some of the soldiers tried to sing as they marched with their feet now ringing on the cold ground and now shushing in unison with a sound like the sweeping of crumbs from a tablecloth. As I put a penny in his hat the man on the edge of the pavement said "Soon it'll be another kind of

song they're singing. Just you wait I sang like that myself once." I turned my head away from the crutches beside the cap with the torn lining and said it was a great pity as I walked on

I was a long time in going to see Robinson. It took me some time to find him too. He was sitting looking at the cigarette he was stubbing while his coffee cup stood empty. I sat down and he said he would have another, black as usual, as he looked out of the window to a new bill which cried "Fight For Freedom."

"That's what we used to say," I said after a long time, as I put my second spoonful of sugar in the cup. I let it struggle over with each grain tumbling slowly like a living but sad machine into my brown-paper coloured coffee. As I pushed the bowl over to him he lit a match and, watching it for a moment, said, "It's a long time since some of us even said it."

I was silent at that because it made me sore inside. I waited till three trucks had passed, one with a gun pointing towards the sky. The tarpaulin round it whipped in the wind and slashed the face of a soldier who bent down to wrap it more tightly. As he jumped back holding his eye I smiled and said "The first casualty"

Robinson patted his cigarette slowly with his forefinger several times to shake the ash off and said "For them. You don't see ours. At least twenty have joined up, and a lot more don't speak to me in the street"

I should have liked to offer to help then, but I knew from what he'd said why M'Kay and Robertson and Dunn and even Fraser had been cold. They thought I had run away when I saw it coming, I who so often saw things long before them; they could not know how

happy I was, and how Moira had been so much to me that I had not seen this at all.

They would not understand, either, how hard it would be for her now, for she was not of our way of thinking. I sometimes wish now I had offered even although Tom would not have accepted. He must have been disappointed and doubtful of me or he would not have written me that letter before he died of pneumonia on the hunger strike.

"Always remember," he wrote—I can remember it so well now that I do not need to look at it, which is as well, for it was the writing of an old man—and Tom was younger than me, "no matter what your enemies say, nor even what your friends think or do, and those who are closest to you in all things tell you, stand firm by yourself even if you are alone—alone, I mean, as a man for yourself and not as many of us have been proud to be, alone in a great cause. After all, it is easier to be alone in a great cause than in yourself." Tom wrote that because he'd heard about Moira and her illness and how I'd taken no part in the work of our friends, and he would hear too of what happened at the cliffs which was before they caught him. Tom would know what I felt and how I nearly thought sometimes after she'd gone that perhaps the bandages on my eyes just before the battleships came might have been a high price even for my Moira.

I left him sitting with his coffee, patting his cigarette with his long forefinger and tired of even looking up to see the men who marched and the rattling trucks. I met some more of our friends, friends who had remained true, but all of them were cold. None of them shook me by the hand as Tom had done, for the last time.

David shook hands, but then, like Moira, he was not of our way of thinking, and did not count a man's beliefs in his friendship—as I used to laugh at myself for never doing with him, or with Moira for that matter. He is of that way now, and often talks about it as he pushes my chair and swears like he doesn't mind when the wind whips his sleeve from his pocket, but then so are many who can do nothing. He was kind to me that day in his uniform and shining leather, but it was not as a close friend is kind, and when I left at his green-painted gate from which I picked the specks of rust as we stood silent I thought there was a gulf between us which we would not bridge again.

I was like a drunk man when I went down the street, and saw little. There was a gash inside and the gash had frozen. I felt like the animals one reads of which draw themselves painfully to their lairs with their entrails dragging behind them. Inside I was dead and sad—but not nobly sad and tautly comfortable as I was to be with Moira when the buds came again.

I just walked and felt one of the big drops of rain on my nose. Then I turned up the collar of my overcoat and slumped my hands deeper into my pockets.

I did not hear what the woman at the corner said as I waited for a car to pass, and did not look at her as I wiped the spittle from my lapel with my handkerchief and picked up the feather she had flung. I was known in the city, you see, and she must have been at meetings where I had spoken. Perhaps she was one of those who cheered me until the battleships came.

I didn't hear much that the crowd said outside the picture house either when the drunk soldier I bumped against struck me and pulled the feather from my button.

hole. They tried to hold him from me, and I should not have hit him when he struck me again, but I was not thinking and I was sorry for him.

. . . . .

I was not a long time in prison, and I think little of it now except sometimes when my back is sore. It was not their boots which made it so that I feel it now. It was when I went over the cliffs that that was done, but their marks are there now as they were when I used to try to hide them from Moira.

She was there, frail and very tired looking with her black beret unable to control her wispy hair, outside the big gates when I came out. She held my torn, white fingers tight and I clutched hers for protection and to keep her from looking at them they were so thin, with the bones nearly piercing them I thought.

It was just after noon when we got off the bus two corners from our house, but there were no leaves then, just hard dust and a coarse wind. We held tight to each other as we walked to the house, peaceful and happy, and close bound because of the darkness within us. I found it hard not to wince when she clung round my waist and hurt my back, and I did not like it when she pulled my head down and kissed the yellowing bruise on my forehead I said a water tap had made.

There was much we hid from each other in the bare months that followed when the ground was hard and when it became soft again, when it was covered with firm white and then became churned up mud, and as we hid them we knew they were not hidden. For that we were happier. Often when we went down to the roadway in the darkness with the stars swinging into

the clouds and the moon sailing through them, she with her head on my shoulder and hands holding my hand on her breast I felt I wanted to talk of it all.

She, too, would nearly tell me of the hardness of the village people. But we knew it was better that we should just know.

Many nights we went and stood below our tree without leaves on it to rustle and looked for a long time at our little window. Some nights we left the lights on and others when the fire was burning brightly we would put them out so that we could watch the flickering in the window. Often the aeroplanes roared in the North when we stood there in silence; then the guns would bark and the searchlights start to sniff in the sky. Then we would go inside again and pull the blinds down so that we might not think of it

We would sit by the fire, perhaps with no lights and, putting my head on her lap, I would listen to her singing and smile into her tired, creased eyes as she stroked my hair. There were times when I found it hard not to burst into weeping there was such sadness lying in my heart beside its happiness, the bitterness on top of the sweetness as when one loves unrequited. But over it all was the joy that there was Moira above me and Moira was mine. We spoke little in these evenings, but we clung close.

Sometimes we woke in the night when the sirens went in the city. Moira would shudder a little when a large bomb crashed, and would slip her arm round me. She never said anything when I shifted it from the sore bits on my back, but I could feel her shrink a little. She was with that as David is now when I talk callously, to cleanse myself, of my "high dive" as I call it. When I



shifted her arm she said nothing but just held me the tighter by the shoulder and my tears were near, so much like a child needing guarding was this woman with many more and harder years than me behind her. It was hard for her not to be of our way of thinking.

I will never know how hard I suppose

She was a little one to me, small looking, with her misbehaved hair and quietly nervous voice which sometimes said silly things which made us both laugh. But she held her head high. She was noble and she grew proud as only those who are tested can grow

Often I tried for excuses for her not to go to the village, but that was to her as it was to me when she kissed my scared forehead or forgot and glanced at the bruises on my leg as I got ready for bed. She would not let me go with her

"We see too much of each other," she would laugh, knowing that we sometimes grudged even sleeping time because we could not look and look and look. She would put on her little black beret and wave to me at the door as she stood with her basket at the gate. Then she turned and her frail shoulders were squared as she walked with her head held too high past the corner where the daffodils were so gay when I was to grow sad. She never looked back; just as I had not dared to think of her when, with my face touching the steel on their boot toes and my nose cold on the hard concrete, I had sung their war songs.

She also was the only one I dared not think of, though she had so shortly gone from me, when I stared over my shoulder that evening at the sun and then at the rocky ledges below me, alone on the cliff top.

The sun was often with us in those days. He was there on what I christened the first day of spring, the first of our autumn. That was the day I read of the great battle, the day of the first shooting of our friends. It shone on our glistening garden and the path turned damp as it sucked in the puny warmth. In the early afternoon I heard many cars pass, for it was a Saturday and the people were looking for the freshness. I did not see them, for the bedroom was at the back.

There I watched the dead grass on the hills, brown at the roots and tipped with white, and the heather sparse with the fasting of the winter, struggle to gather some of the golden light which was so clean for us all. The sheep on the lower slope moved slowly, and as they moved their shadows went with them, tired but rubbing themselves on the ground as it struggled from its long sleep.

Moirá slept little, but as I sat with her hand in mine, although it got cold stretching from the bed, she asked me to tell her of what I saw. I tried, but it was hard, for outside it was becoming young again and stirring with new life as the glister went from the tangled weeds next the black hut with the broken window, and the spider's web on the window started to show red and blue in the gleams of the sun.

All was becoming young; the new child was coming: and we were both of us afraid lest our child, which she said would wait until the warm weather had come and was nearly gone, would not come. Had she not taken ill that day we could have gone down to the bridge. We could not have sat but we could have looked for young grass and watched the many bright cars which came from the city panting for the freshness.

I talked a little of what would be there and through her great pain she smiled to me. Her tight smile was so calm and her pale eyes so deep that I became afraid. I feared less as the days went by, because sometimes I knew inside that I should lose her.

I remember I realised it one day the doctor came, but for all that was at peace within. He was with her for a long time and I heard their voices—his steady talk and her laughter—and then long silences, and sometimes the clink of an instrument he laid on the little table with the glass top David had given us. There was a grave confidence about him when he came out, and I smiled when he said I should have to take great care of her. I could not have wanted to take more care of Moira had she been one of my own limbs. I was to care much less for them when the buds had burst and the birds started to sing.

They did not sing the evening I stood looking at the horizon ; but the seagulls screeched. They thought to warn me who wished no warning just as the fisherman saved me who wished no saving

The doctor said that soon she would be well again, and told me she was a brave woman.

Now I think the doctor's detached words as he studied the palms and backs of the gloves he was pulling on were everything one could say of Moira. She was a brave woman.

I stood at the door as he went down the path, white again with the hard frost, and nodded as he called "I'll be back to-morrow about the same time." I stood as he drove away and watched a worn robin pick in the grass for something to make it strong again. Its breast was red, but it was faded: as my love's cheeks. With the

sun, and the bright flowers, and the blue skies strewn with white, fleecy clouds, the robin's breast grew bright again, and I saw him often as he grew fat on the lawn

Moira was not sleeping when I went in again. Raising her hand for me she smiled with the smile I always think of as Moira's smile. It was a tired smile, which stabbed people all the more because they could not but smile back when they felt something stinging the backs of their eyes. "You've been a long time," she pouted mockingly "What nonsense has doctor been telling you to-day?"

I said he'd been telling me that storks were very dear just now, but there would be competition among them to come to such a lovely wife as mine, and perhaps even the president of the Union himself would come at cut rates

Then I told her of the tired little robin with its straggly feathers and she said I should have given him bread to eat. When I took her forefinger in my teeth as I sat on the edge of the bed and held her thin wrist she said I needed the bread myself because I seemed hungry. She was hungry, she said—hungry for the sunshine and the river and the gay coloured flowers with their freshness. If she hurried to get better, I said, we would go to see the snowdrops by the church; or if she was lazy and did not hurry, it would be the crocuses, and the sun would shine on us because he would have to come out to look at two people like us. Her blue eyes were clear then and she did not smile as she looked at the ceiling, because she was thinking of the brightness outside

. . .

She was in time to see the snowdrops, but we had to walk very slowly and the wind blew with rain in it. The

bedraggled flowers looked cold and afraid. We went to the church that day for the first time. She said she did not wish to go, but that was because she did not wish to hurt me for my way of thinking. I knew it would be a happiness to Moira for I saw she was glad the day the minister first came to our house.

That was about the time of the great bombing in the East and two of our friends were shot for the Spithaven mutiny. The minister was a hard man, with thin lips and a straight nose. His tufty eyebrows stopped half way across his eyes and he seldom pretended to like me but he was kind to Moira in her sickness, for he'd known her when she was younger there, and he felt it his duty to be good to her, as did many of the hard ones in the village when her illness came. He came often to the house after his first visit, and I used to leave them alone although it was sore to me not to sit by her for so long; but I felt glad again when I often saw that some of the strain had gone from under her eyes and from her brow.

Several people spoke to Moira that day we first went to the church. She was pleased, and talked with them, because she was not one that could be bitter although she was proud. I did not mind because I knew she had always felt that to be her battle and I was glad she was spared *so* much strain. Many times she told me she didn't care if we didn't go back, but I used to say I liked to hear her sing in a crowd because then I did not hear her voice so much and we would laugh and go slowly down the road again, over our little twisted bridge, and watch for the first buds on the trees.

They were long in coming and for that I was sometimes glad. I wanted the sunshine and the bright fresh-

ness so that Moira might suck it in like the robin and the flowers, but so often I felt that I was to lose her that young things and those coming to life made me still and cold inside. When I saw a new shoot of green grass or heard a bird chirp with a fresh song I would hold her arm the tighter and look hungrily at her white face with still a little brown from the sun of the summer which was nearly ending when I met her first.

It is by the churches that I remember that time although we were but five Sundays there altogether. I sometimes think we were every day in the little place with the varnish that nipped the nostrils and stuck to the women's black silk dresses when they rose at the end of the organ playing the first verse. Often I felt I should have liked to join in their singing. When Moira looked to the top of the pulpit and, as they say, took the high notes, I opened my lips to be with her many times, but I was always sullen in these things. I don't think she would have liked it anyway. Moira was always afraid I would change my way of thinking for her.

She thought little of the world's things, and sometimes I wonder when I talk for long times by the fire with David what we spoke of in those days, but for all her simplicity she was a brave woman within, and wanted others to be true to themselves also.

Sometimes after breakfast when we sat with our chairs close together or in those evenings by the fire when I put my head in her lap I would talk to her of my feelings—especially when they were strained by a big battle or when some of our friends were shot or more people in the city queues were bombed. She would not agree with me, but did not argue much except in fun. Like

many women she did not think much, and felt as she had been trained to feel; but like few women she was not jealous of another's thoughts. She said she did not think it was so, but that I should not take her word for it, and we would fall to talking of other things—the little one who was coming, or the robin on our lawn, or of the time when her illness first came to her which was many years before I met her. She was patient for one so long trained in the old ways, but she was too old to change much.

There was nothing came between Moira and me. The darkness none would admit in words was within only served to join us the closer. We felt closest on the green bank under our bridge. We could not stay long because of her illness, and could not sit as we'd done when the leaves were brown and we were so brittle-ly happy. We would stand, though, and rest our heads one on the other till the blood seemed to pulse and mix through our hair. We liked to stand just out of the shadow of the bridge with our fingers interlocked and watch the cars nose down. They faltered, then hastened a little, then slowed again at the corner where the sun hid behind the dark pines in the evening. Some of them would blow their horns at the corner and then a bird, or perhaps several, would scurry from the trees and circle round for a long time like the aeroplanes in the distance sometimes did when we saw them from the little hill at the back of our house.

The bridge, I think, was the place we always liked to be most. When we tired of the cars we would look at the water going past. I thought sometimes it was like us. We were happy and close and the sadness round us and within us brought us closer and the river was

there all the time, but moving, and it was the moving that kept it there.

Bud time means for me the last time we came from the little church. There were many buds on the trees, some nearly bursting, and the river, in the broad parts where it turned alongside the road after the bridge, was blue with the sun striking over it. The sun was there with life and the freshness, and the green and purple shot starlings were calling. As they called, the little boys who had been at church whistled back to them. I whistled a little myself as we walked slowly, as we always had to do in those days, but I was silent as, away from the crowd, we stood on the bridge's hump for a little while.

We did not speak as we looked towards the hills with the sheep moving on them, and I locked my fingers in hers—small fingers with bright nails—growing a little less thin again. A blue car with a man and a woman with a white dog in it passed while we were there. The little stones on the road rattled on its mud-guards but there were no leaves to dance in the roadway. We watched it go round the corner and, smiling up to me, Mollie said its horn was like the blacksmith blowing his nose in church. Then we turned and went down the little slope.

We walked slowly and held each other by the wrist. Her shoulder was pressed against my arm and she hummed one of the psalm tunes softly. She stopped to lay her head on my shoulder as the sun went behind a cloud, scattered like cotton wool teased on a table. We were not to know it was for the last time.

At the gate we gazed a little while at our house with



its porch and the red tiles and the wisp of smoke creeping from the chipped chimney. When the sun came out again I was happy and thought for a moment it was the happiness of falling leaf time again. But that could not be. The bud time love was better perhaps because we needed each other then. I tucked a little strand of her tired hair into her funny hat as she turned to point to the little robin, which was bright again, hopping on the lawn which had now much green grass. She put up her hand and caught mine for a little while. She rested it on my lapel and we felt the blood run from one to the other before she said I must wait at the gate till she called because she had a surprise for me.

Then she ran, swinging as women do, to the door and stopped to get her yale key from her green bag. I saw the bag fall, first on its end, and then turn over like a dying sheep, as she gave a little cry and caught the side of the porch.

When I was a little boy a field mouse came into our garden once. He was a timid little one with bright eyes and a long tail which dragged after him like a bride's train. I saw him twice, then one day a dog from next door came into our garden and saw the little mouse too. He seized him and as he gripped his neck with his teeth the mouse gave a cry. Just the one cry and then he was silent.

It was a poor little cry like that that my Moira gave. I ran up the path and caught her as she was falling with her fourth finger bleeding where a spike from the climbing roses had pricked her. I held her in my left arm, her head lolling on my breast, as I picked her key from the door mat with her initials on it—it was also the initial of our name but I liked to think it was hers.

Her handkerchief had blown from her bag on to the bottom step and I meant to pick it up when I came out. I forgot and did not see it again; it must have blown away while I was inside

I took her to the bedroom and laid her hat on the little glass-topped table. I then took off the little fur jacket I still like to touch sometimes and laid her on the bed. I gave her some water and a little drop of brandy and, as she opened her eyes, patted her left hand which was cold, and kissed her before I went outside.

The car which I stopped was a large black one and the number was ZS 6138. The chauffeur was alone in it—he was smoking and was very kind, offering me help and a brandy flask before driving off fast for the doctor who lived in the second house on the right after the corner with the pines that the red sun peered through when the leaves were dancing.

She was lying still when I got back to our bedroom which looked out on to the sun-bathed hill slope where the sheep's shadows caressed the grass. Her eyes were open and she was looking at the pale blue ceiling, thinking no doubt of the blue skies of falling-leaf time. I moved the glass-topped table from the bed-side and, shifting the basket chair from the end of the bed, sat down on it to take her hand.

She tried to sit up then, and her lips drew back tight and her brows were deep furrowed with pain. I said she should lie still but, pouting, she said she was going to be there for a while and must change. Both of us knew, I think, that she would not be there long.

I helped her with her little tweed jacket and the brown and white skirt and laid the flimsy things carefully on

the other basket chair. I found her blue pyjamas with the white flowers like the church crocuses and she lay down again. She was in great pain then and her lips were drawn back and together, so white it was hard to know where they began. I was glad when I heard the doctor ring the bell.

I left him with her for a little while and read the paper, understanding what I read but knowing I should remember nothing as when one is tipsy. When I heard him call to me I knew there was little more. He said he had given her an injection and would wait for a while. He was an understanding man, Dr. MacDonald, and kept silent while at the corner by the window he turned the pages of one of her magazines I sometimes laughed at. He looked towards us now and again; then, after a time, he said he thought he would like a drink of water.

I took him to the bathroom in the hall and there he rinsed the glass before he filled it, drank half, filled it again and drank half. He shook the last drops from it before he put it in the white holder to the right of the mirror and, looking at his nails, asked if he might go through to the living room as there was a fire there. I went through with him and he would not let me put on more coal.

As I closed the bedroom door slowly Moira smiled with her white lips in the way that makes a man smile back but feel a deep soreness inside.

She lifted her left arm for me to hold and I took her wrist in my right. With my left hand I held her fingers till she asked if I thought I was the doctor. I said no, I doubted if she had a pulse but that I often thought of feeling her head to see if it was soft. Then we were quiet

for a long time. I could feel her fingers stiffen now and then as the pain cut through her and when I looked she would smile again with her tired lips. The creases round her eyes were weary.

A sheep bleated on the young slopes and then the clock chimed in the room where the doctor was. I laid my head on the pillow beside hers and she turned a little so that her nose was on my cheek. I was going to say it was cold like a dog's and then remembered that a dog's nose is cold when it is well.

We lay so for a long time though my back got sore with leaning over and when the doctor looked in she moved so that some of her pale red hair went in my eye. He asked how she was feeling now, and as her fingers, interlocked in mine, tightened till they hurt me, she said the pain was not so bad. The doctor said that was fine and went away again in a way that did not make us think it funny he should leave us and yet stay in the house. I said there might be a letter from David tomorrow and she said yes they usually came by the second post.

Then we were silent again and she tried to hum the psalm tune she had hummed as we came from the twisted bridge which I thought must have been in pain as she was now. But her voice was tired, all of my Moira was tired then; her hair was weary and was not alive any more as it had been when I had made it chase the comb; and her blue eyes were bright only as a tired man's smile. Moira was tired and, as our heads rested together, I wished that she might be as the little robin which lost its tiredness with the fresh sun.

I did not tell her not to be silly, we would be long together yet, when she said we had been happy. She

used strange words for people to speak—like nobility, and courage, and deep kinship, and being strong for oneself in adversity. I let her talk, only putting out my tongue now and then to suck another strand of the hair which I used to say sometimes had specks of grey at the roots. Then she turned her nose to my cheek once more and I think I kissed the white lips, now a little blue, though it seems like a book. She turned again to look at the blue ceiling and said the sun was good and strengthened the bonds between two people. She was quiet then, as was I, and I felt the blood running from one to the other again and a tingling in my head where it touched hers

. . . . .

I lay for a little while as I went sore below my left ribs, but there was no stinging behind my eyes. Then I rose and smoothed her hair. Her eyes were closed and the eyelids were pale and weary. I went then to the doctor and told him. He shook me by the hand and went through to her saying she had been a brave woman. I met him again in the hall and he talked of death certificates and registration and such things before going down the red path in the twilight.

I shut the door before he reached the gate and stood for a little while holding the handle before I lit a cigarette and inhaled twice before going to make some tea.

Inside I was numbed and did not think much. Now and again as I stopped to look at a headline in the paper lying on my armchair which I used so little, or spoke aloud—saying “bread ? butter ? sugar ?” and going to the kitchen for them—I would suddenly remember the cold weight pulling on my inside and wonder how anything else was in my mind.

I drank all of the tea and ate much bread.

I sat by the fire after washing the dishes, but it had been out for a long time when I cried first. Then I knew what had happened to me, and all my inside was sore. I do not know if I cried again, for I remember little after those two puffs at my cigarette, but the soreness was with me all the day before even the first pale outlines of the fence became clear through the early dawn and the first motor passed just before I rose from my chair and went out.

I do not know where I walked on that last walk of mine when my nails bit my hands and my teeth clenched every now and then in my tight drawn jaws, but my tautness and the gnawing soreness inside told me where it would take me, though I did not think of it

I was not surprised when I looked at the sea, but I did not think in so many words of what I was doing till the seagulls shrilled about the whitened ledges and I looked over my shoulder at the sun well down in the sky before bending my knees to jump.



## Contributors

**GERMAINE BEAUMONT** is a well-known French novelist and journalist, and has been on the editorial staff of the *Matin* for about eighteen years. She is Norman by birth and comes of a family of writers: her great-uncle, Henri de Pène, was a well-known journalist and her mother, Anne de Pène, a novelist. She started her literary career at the age of fifteen and lived in England for several years before joining the *Matin*. She speaks English well and has a great liking for England and everything English. She contributes articles and short stories regularly to a number of literary and women's periodicals in Paris, and has written several successful novels, notably *Peix-Niege*, *Piege* (Prix Renaudot 1930), *La Longue Nuit*, and *Le Manteau Partage*. A great many of her short stories, which are remarkable for their pithiness and acuity of observation, have appeared in translation in England during the last ten years or so.

**GEORGE BELLAIRS**—a biographical note appeared in *Penguin Parade* 2, which contained his story *The Cuckoo's Boots*.

**STEPHEN VINCENT BENET**, a well known American writer who has contributed several stories in *Penguin Parade*. An account of his life appeared in *Penguin Parade* 1.

**A. C. BOYD** was born in 1902. Spent infancy in India where father held judicial posts. Educated at Moira House, Eastbourne, where an appreciation of the arts was acquired, and at University College, London. Holds a diploma in Librarianship. Worked among books for some ten years, read literary criticism, modern literature, and poetry when off-duty. Subsequently became general help to interior-decorator, private secretary.



waitress In 1934 was enabled by improved financial circumstances to take half-time jobs, and started to write poetry seriously Verse and reviews have appeared in *Adelphi*, *English*, *London Mercury*, *New Verse*, *Poems of To-day*, 3rd series, *Year's Poetry* 1937.

JOAN CHARLTON was born in 1921 at Stanley, "one of a number of deplorably ugly mining villages not far from Newcastle-on-Tyne" "I passed," she continues, "from the usual Elementary School to the Alderman Wood Secondary School, where I am at present in my sixth year, reading for the Oxford Higher School Certificate in English, History and Latin My main aim in poetry is to use words *meaningfully*, which inevitably leads to the abandonment of rhyme and to various experiments in construction of which *Hearth*, with its prose insertion, is one"

Some of her earlier poems appeared in the 1937 edition of *The Threshold*, an anthology of verse from schools, and she has broadcasted several of her poems from the BBC Stagshaw station

VICTOR CLARKE was born at Cookham Dene, Berks, and started work in the furnishing trade

When he was eighteen years old he went to Canada, where he remained for about twenty years, working in turn as a carpenter, fireman and as a homesteader in Saskatchewan He studied art at the Chicago Art Institute and during the war served with the Canadians

He is married, has two sons and a daughter and lives at Cookham, Berks He specialises in illustrations for children and industrial illustrations.

RALPH BRUNSKILL COOKE was born in New Zealand in 1899 and educated there, and comes of a family of lawyers Was private secretary to the Chief Justice and Administrator of N.Z. for some years before coming to live in England. Has contributed articles and short stories to periodicals in England and N.Z., and has translated a good deal of French fiction which has appeared in England and the United States.

**JAMES GOULD COZZENS** has contributed twice before to *Penguin Parade*. A biographical note was printed in the first number.

**R. N. CURREY** was born in Mafeking, South Africa, in 1907. Educated at Kingswood School, Bath, and Wadham College, Oxford. He has travelled a certain amount in the Colonies and on the Continent. Married in 1932 Helen Estella Martin (Stella Martin Currey), author of the novels *Paperchase End* and *Prelude for Six Flutes*. Schoolmaster for a living, and writes as a hobby. He has published during the last three or four years some forty or fifty short stories in a variety of journals, and seventy-odd poems and verse translations (chiefly from Mediaeval French) in the literary press.

**RAIBEART ELDER** was born in 1917. Educated at Greenock Finner School, Greenock Academy and Hawick High School. Has been in newspaper work for four years, the past two have been spent as daily reporter in Aberdeen and Glasgow with *Glasgow Herald* group. Previously was cinema editor, children's page editor, feature writer and "most things except astrologist and sports editor". Spare time devoted to political and economic study, German, shorthand (which is a consuming passion), voracious reading on practically everything but astronomy, cricket and football. Has written few short stories, and this is the first to be accepted.

**LORIMER EYRE** has been an actor, stage producer, scene shifter and clergyman. Early in life he planned to enter the Church, he also planned to be a Doctor and then decided to be a Barrister, studying for each profession in turn. He is now a writer and finds the writing career, he says, "the hardest and worst paid of the lot". He is due to have two novels published this year.

**LESLIE HALWARD** was born in 1905 over a pork butcher's shop in Birmingham. As a child he witnessed the killing of pigs, sheep and cattle "not only without horror but with some pleasure

and excitement " He attended first a council and then a grammar school, and at fifteen left the latter to become an apprentice to a toolmaker. During his apprenticeship, he tells us, he sometimes worked a thirteen hour day his pay was six shillings a week with a yearly rise of two shillings until the last year when he was given a pound. At the end of seven years he was discharged because his employer had no work for him to do.

He then got a job in a factory, but at the end of two weeks was told by the manager that he knew next to nothing about the trade, and was given the option of clearing out or working as an improver for thirty-five shillings a week. He became an improver. Eighteen months later, having been refused a rise for the third time, deciding that toolmaking was not much of a trade, and that in any case he would lose his reason if he went on working in a factory, he left, and became a plasterer at sixpence an hour.

Then suddenly, he says, "for no reason at all that I can think of, I wanted to write " In 1929 his first story was published in *Everyman*. For about two years he was in and out of work. In 1932 three things happened almost simultaneously—he received just over a hundred pounds, left to him by his mother who had died a year before, his second story was published, and he was informed that he was to be subjected to the Means Test. He put the money in the bank so that it could be periodically drawn on, told the authorities that he was now working on his own account, and became a professional writer.

He is married and lives in a sixteenth century cottage near Malvern. Has contributed to thirty-six anthologies, magazines, periodicals and newspapers, including *The Best Short Stories* (five consecutive annual issues), *The Faber Book of Modern Stories*, *Modern Short Stories*, *New Writing*, *New Stories*, *The London Mercury*, *The Listener*, *Life and Letters To-Day*, *Left Review*, and *The Manchester Guardian*. Is the author of two volumes of short stories, *To Tea on Sunday*, and *The Money's All Right*, and an autobiography, *Let me Tell You*.

DANIEL KALICSTEIN was born at Berkhamstead in 1918 and most of his life has been spent in East London. His parents

are Jewish Polish immigrants who came to England just before the War "We still live," he says, "in the heart of the 'Ghetto slums,' and my father is the ordinary Jewish tailor the novelists like to write about" As to education "I had," he remarks, "the usual elementary school education until I was eleven, when I gained a scholarship to a Secondary School and matriculated at sixteen At seventeen I was successful in passing the Civil Service Clerical Class Examination" He has been writing for three years, but this is his first professionally published story It was recently awarded first prize in the Short Story section of the Civil Services 1938 Eisteddfodd, of which the Editor of *Penguin Parade* was the final adjudicator

GERALD KERSH has been described as "a writer of power and fury" Author of novels *Jews Without Jehovah* (banned), *Men are So Ardent*, and *Night and the City* In preparation *Let Lying Dogs Sleep* and *The Weak and the Strong* Has written many short stories, published in the *Evening Standard*, *Bystander*, *John o' London's Weekly*, &c Though not yet thirty, has packed into his life a great variety of experience He has been such things as middleweight wrestler, cinema-manager, chuckle-out, fortune-teller, teacher of French, night-club proprietor, bairman, and salesman of sausages, shoes and carpets Was born in Teddington, Middlesex Took to writing for a living in 1934 His work, we are told, is either dictated, or written direct on typewriter, no word of the original draft ever being revised

LÉON LAFAGE was born at St Vincent-le-Cloutier, Olt Quercy, department of the Lot, France He studied Law, but abandoned it for literature, and began his literary career at the same time as his friend Bernard Giasset, the publisher His first book, a collection of short stories entitled *La Chevre de Piscadoue*, hailed by the critics as a masterpiece, was the first success of the celebrated publishing house of Giasset, then located in a small office in the Rue Gay-Lussac He has published two novels *Par Aventure* and *Les Abeilles Mortes* This last work brought him the admiration of Maurice Barres They were followed by

*Bottier-Lampagne*, a political satire, and *Le Pays de Gambetta*. After that came three more volumes of short stories: *Le Bel Ecu de Jean Clochepin* (from which the present translation is taken), *La Felouque Bleue*, and *Le Fife de Buis*. They all deal with the country life of Provence, in particular of Quercy. He contributes to a number of well-known periodicals and his writing is often compared by critics to that of Paul Arène and Alphonse Daudet.

ALEXANDER MARTIN was educated at an English University and after wandering over most of the civilized and uncivilized parts of the globe settled in Mexico. This is his first published story.

WILLIAM MAXWELL says: "I was born in Lincoln, Illinois, in 1908, of an old Scotch-Irish-English-Welsh-German-French family which prides itself on its descent from Jonathan Harrington, the first man killed in the Revolution, and on its somewhat remote connection with a gentleman who shot the governor of Kentucky from a third-story window at rather a sporting distance."

When I was fourteen my family moved to Chicago where I achieved a certain reputation by going without lunch at school to buy books so that I would have the right kind of biography. I had it in mind to be an artist when I grew up, but went four years to the University of Illinois instead. In 1931 I received

an A.M. at Harvard and returned to Illinois to teach. In

1933 I bit the hand of the insurance company that was feeding me, and retired to a farm in Wisconsin to write a novel.

In the fall I started off to Harvard again for a Ph.D. I

missed the boat from New York to Boston and stayed in New York, getting and spending and reviewing books for the *Herald Tribune* until I came upon Lafcadio Heain's account of the delightful city of St. Pierre, Martinique. Off I went, but it wasn't a very fast boat, and St. Pierre was destroyed by a volcanic eruption some thirty-one years before I got there. After a decent interval I came back. At present I am telling people about my travels."

EDWARD MUNRO was born in 1917 in Belfast. Educated at the Royal High School of Edinburgh and is at present in his final year of study for the degree of M A with Honours in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. This is his first professionally published story, having previously only contributed to school and university magazines and two or three sports articles to local newspapers.

J. C. TARR was born in South Wales in 1905, son of a sailor. "Despite a fixed determination to go to sea," he says, "I found myself at Cheltenham School of Art, and then at the Royal College of Art."

Six years ago he met with a motor accident, and spent several months in hospital. Entertained the authorities by painting in bed, and paid the surgeon's fees with the proceeds. During convalescence took up wood-engraving, finding it less strenuous than painting.

Now living at Lydney on Severn, and present ambition is to paint and engrave the nearby Forest of Dean.

EISDELL TUCKER was born in 1900 and has spent most of her life teaching and doing various odd secretarial jobs. For the past ten years she has been writing verse which has appeared in various periodicals, and has also contributed short stories to *John o' London* and *The New Adelphi*. One of the latter was reprinted in *Best Short Stories of 1933*. A collection of her poems is shortly to be published by Messrs Macmillan under the title *Stony Ground*.

FRED URQUHART was born in Edinburgh in 1912. A biographical note appears in *Penguin Parade 2*.

J. W. WALLACE says, "I was born in Salaverry, Peru, in 1907. My father was of Scotch and my mother of Anglo-German parentage. At the age of three I was brought over to England with my brother and sisters and I was educated first at a preparatory school in Plymouth and then at a Public School in

Worcestershire In 1923 I went to South America and worked for several years in the offices of a British-owned railway. After a short visit to New York I returned to London and then went to Spain where I was teaching English and running a small advertising agency in partnership with a Swede when the civil war broke out. I have contributed short stories to *The Passing Show*, the American magazine *Esquire*, and a number of humorous articles to *Punch*."

RAYMOND WATKINSON was born in 1914. A biographical note appears in *Penguin Parade* 3

HENRY MEADE WILLIAMS is a young American author who has published a number of short stories in America. Only one of his stories has previously appeared in print in this country.

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